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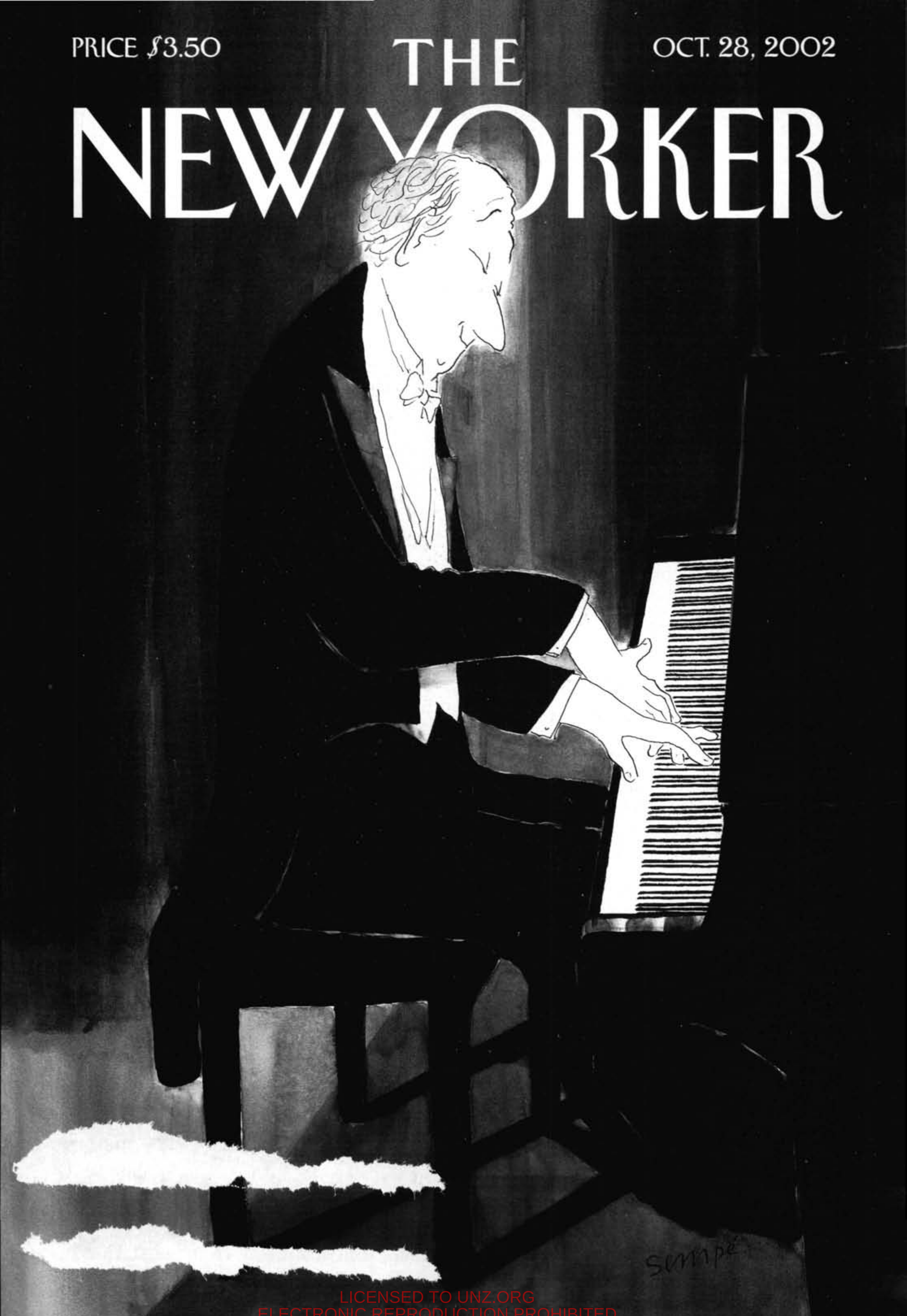

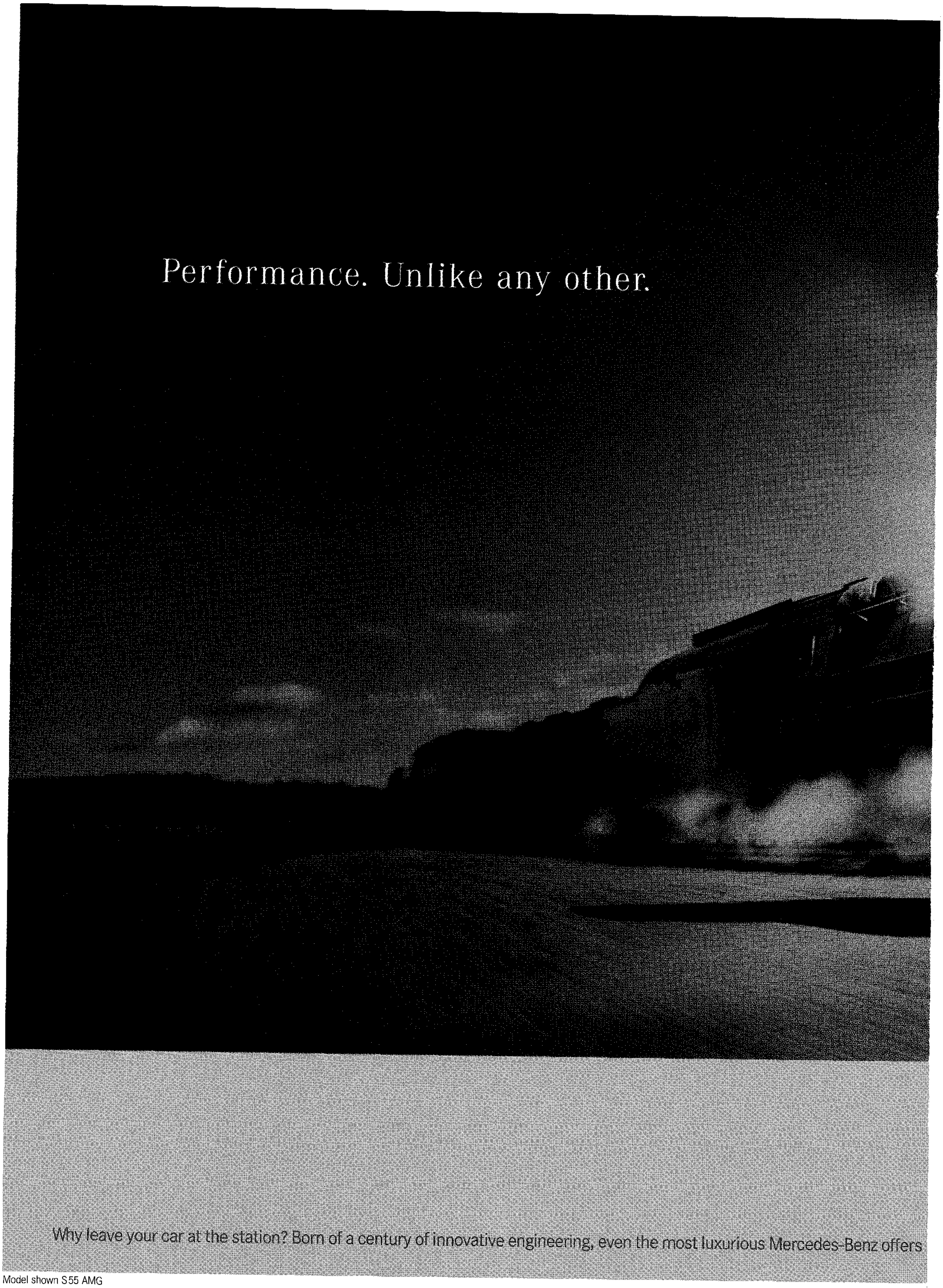
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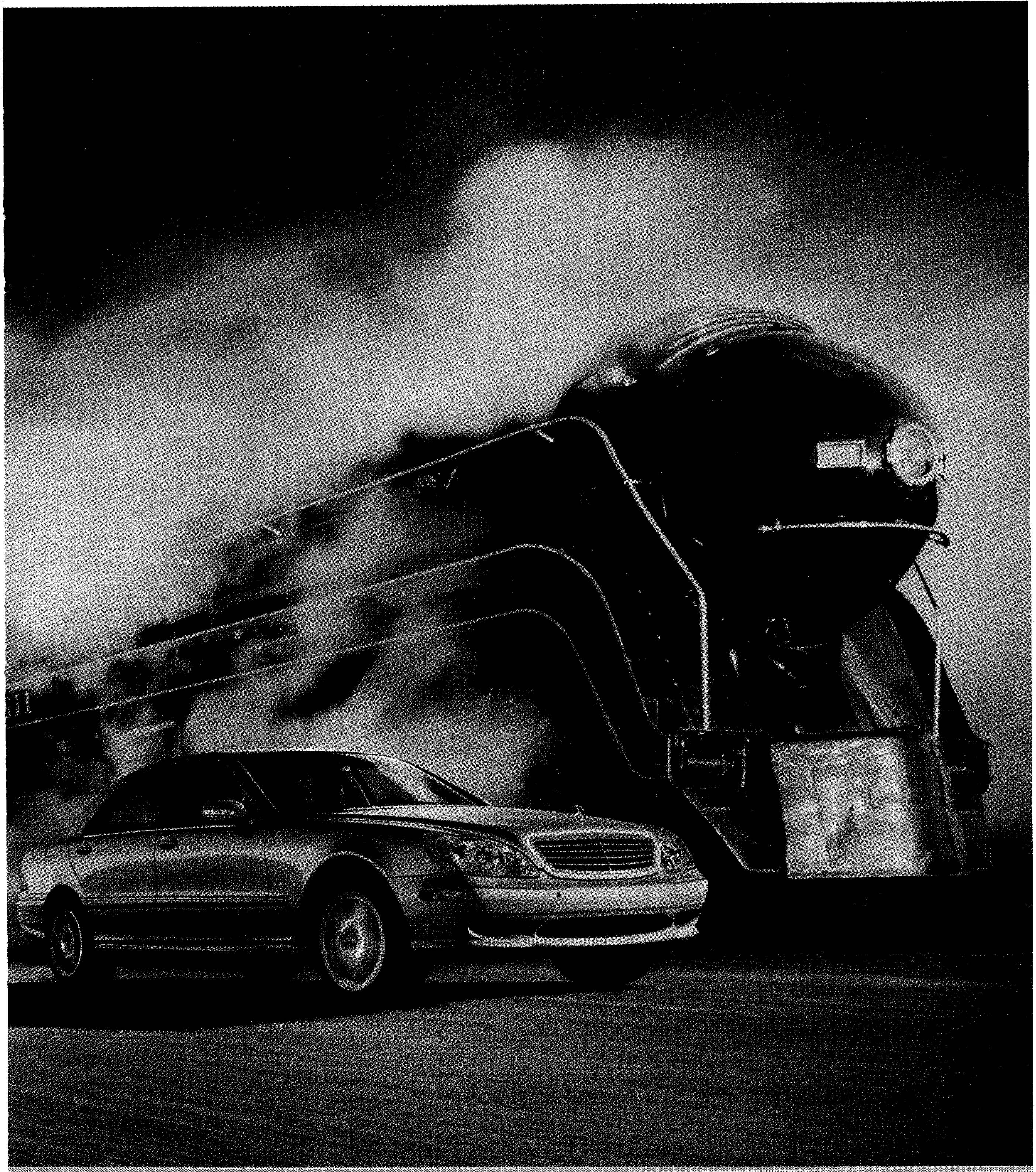

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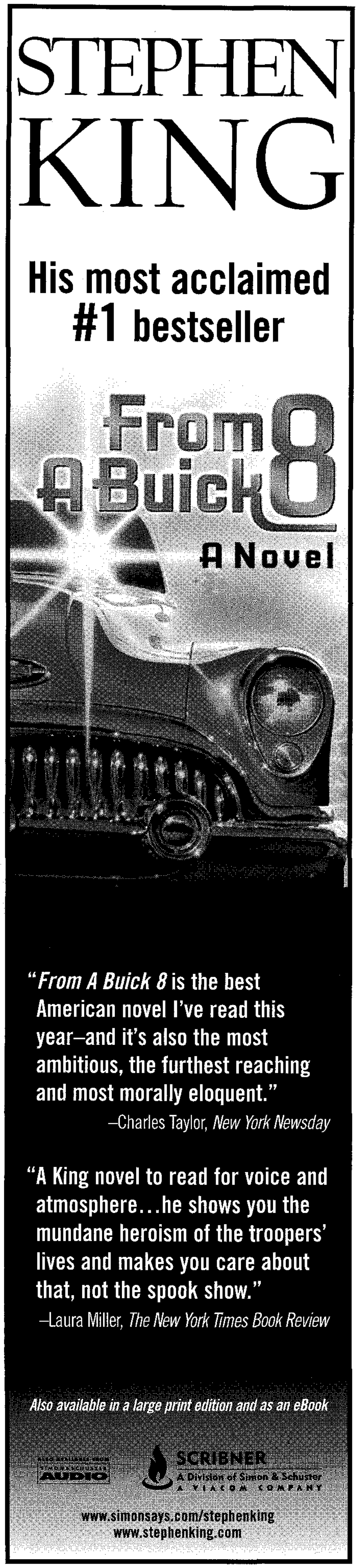
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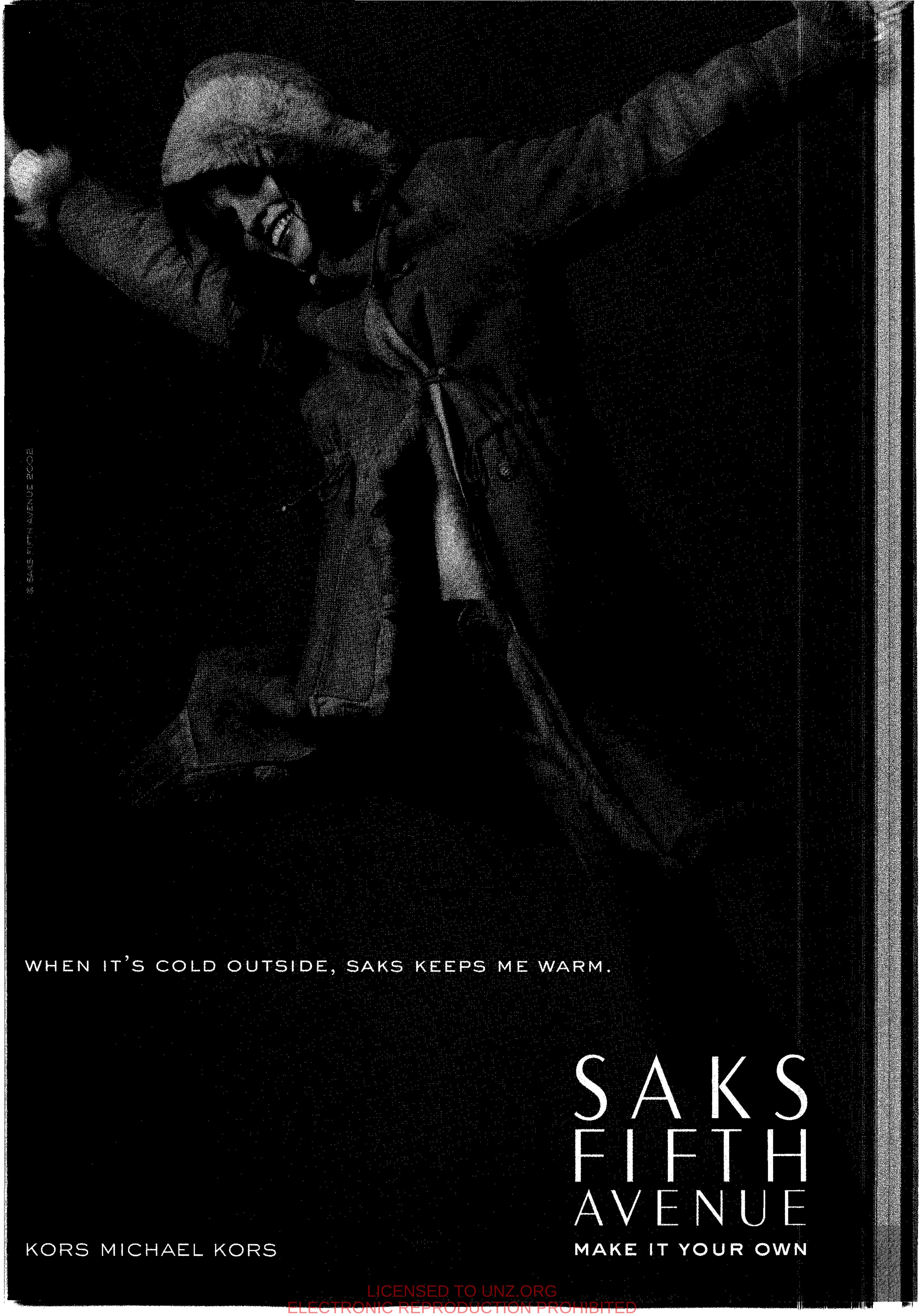
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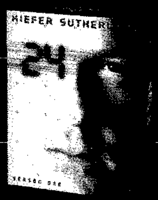
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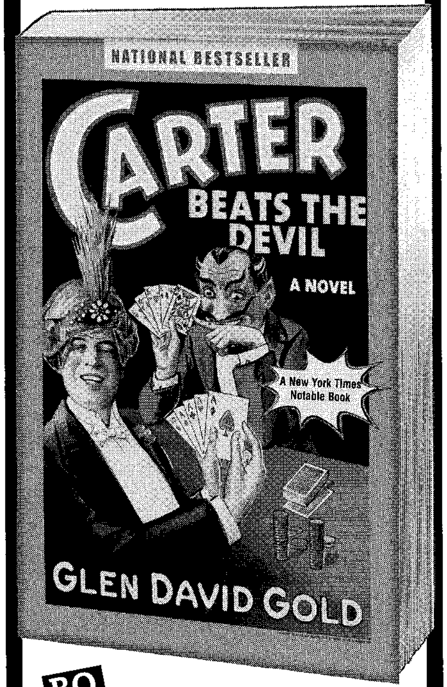

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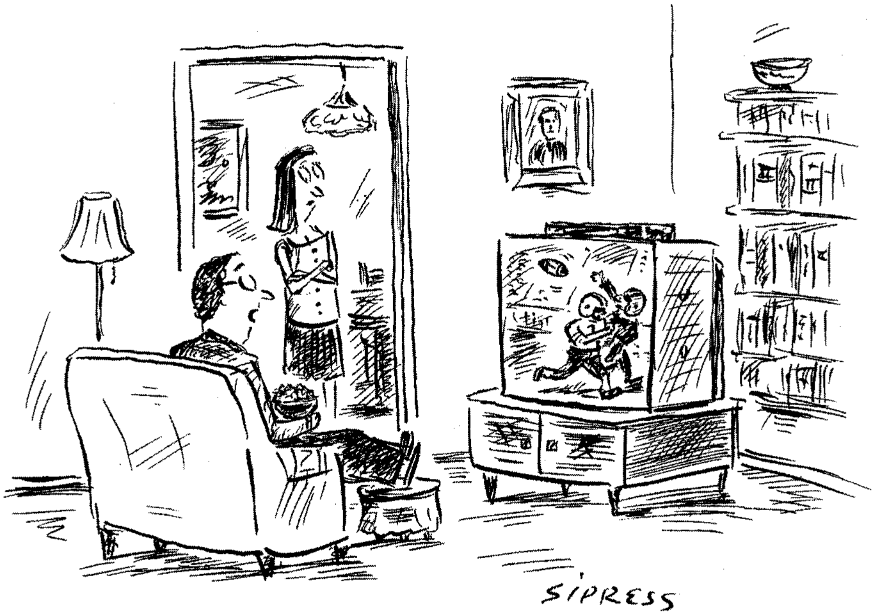

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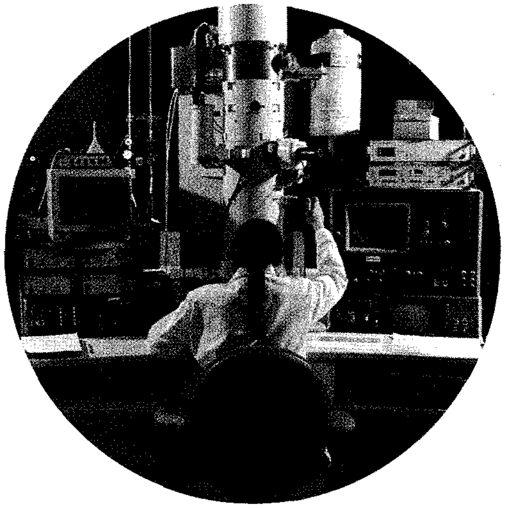

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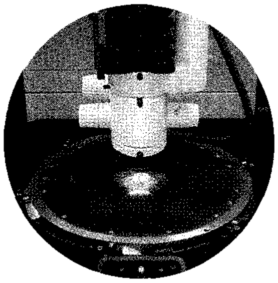

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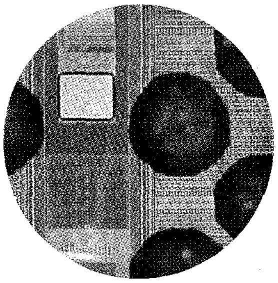

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PICTURE THIS

In his vivid essay about a woman who has lost her ability to identify objects and forms, Oliver Sacks writes that "the recognition of representations requires a learning, the grasping of a code or convention. . . . Thus primitive people who have never been exposed to photographs or drawings may fail to recognize that these are representations of something else; they may see paintings as mere colored surfaces" ("The Case of Anna H.," October 7th). This view has lost ground under empirical scrutiny. When people from pictureless tribes are shown outline sketches of objects familiar to them, they recognize them for what they are. We have also learned that blind people who are asked to recognize or make novel drawings of objects do so quite well, even if they have never seen pictures. Pictures are universals in more ways than we have dared dream, because they cut across vision and touch, as well as cultures sophisticated and modest. Indeed, the most ancient cave art from antipodal parts of the world is often of perfectly recognizable animals. Anna H.'s visual losses, eloquently described by Sacks, are remarkable enough without our having to rely on a culture-bound hypothesis.

John M. Kennedy
Professor of Psychology, University of Toronto
Toronto, Ont.

ENJOYING GADDIS

I appreciated Jonathan Franzen's reflections on the problem of "difficult" fiction, which, as he writes, "sometimes calls for work" ("Mr. Difficult," September 30th). A better word than "work" may be "patience." Students often need to learn both that novels aren't instant-gratification commodities and that the payoffs of fiction (and life) are accretive or cumulative, so that when you've spent a while in the company of, say, Dorothea Brooke, you start reacting to the layered responses you've already been having and she's already exhibited. Learning to cultivate this sedimented pleasure is perhaps the best reason I know for reading fiction. Otherwise smart students today, however, for whom so many factors weigh against the cultivation of patience, find that reading even a classic author Franzen refers to as a "good read"—such as Conrad, or Dickens, or, God forbid, Jane Austen—has become tiresome work.

James Buzard
Associate Professor of Literature
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Mass.

Franzen blasts William Gaddis for his obvious weaknesses: his tendency to "rant," his ideas. Gaddis's genius is surely in his surface, not in his message; his innovation to record the voices and the strange look of late-twentieth-century America. As a stylist, Gaddis remains the strongest of his era. His prose carries with it the sounds of generations of earlier writers; it mingles the voices of admen and lawyers and school officials and mediocre playwrights with those of Emerson, Shakespeare, Twain, and Longfellow. Franzen holds Gaddis up to the false standard of "The Recognitions" without giving him credit for what he actually, I believe, set out to accomplish: to render in vivid and unswervable exactitude the world as it swirled around him. Franzen also trashes "Finnegans Wake," but doesn't explain how "Ulysses," or, for that matter, "Tristram Shandy," or "Don Quixote"—all comic novels based on absurd ideas, full of ranting—continue to bring pleasure to readers long after their authors' deaths.

Benjamin Swett
New York City

CLARIFICATION: A quotation about Hamlet's Dionysian qualities, on page 96 of the September 30th issue, was misattributed: it was not Harold Bloom being Nietzschean but Nietzsche himself.

•

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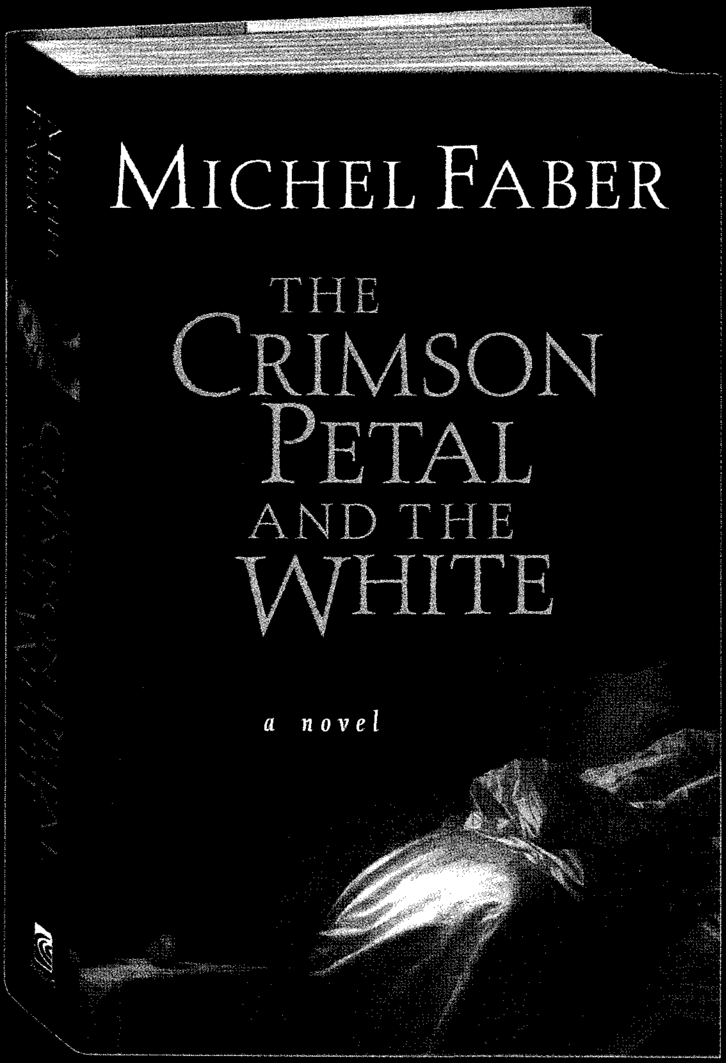

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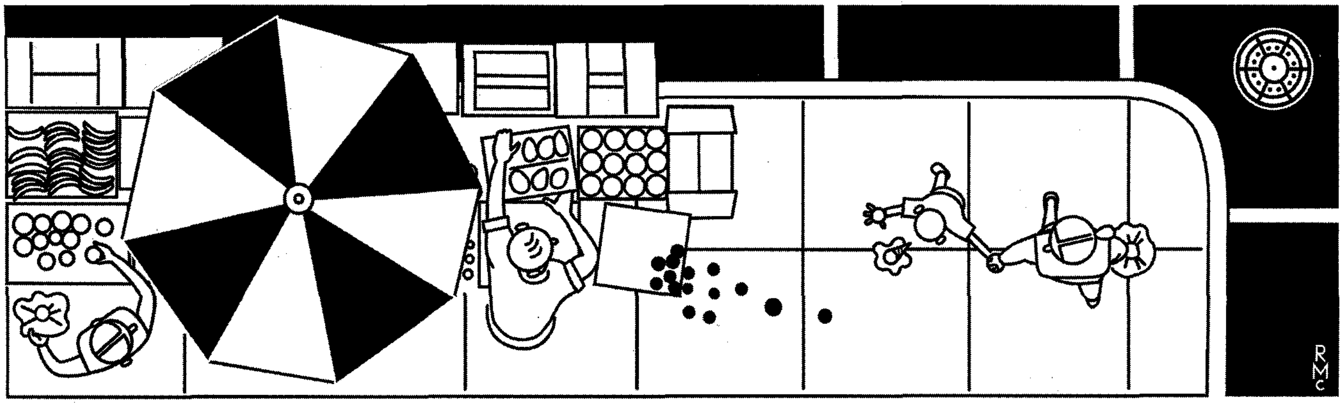


THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BEWILDERNESS
The British comedian Bill Bailey brings his one-man show to New York. Previews begin Oct. 29. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

BIG AL
A young screenwriter obsesses over his hero, Al Pacino, in a play by Bryan Goluboff. In previews. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 239-6200.)

BOOK OF DAYS
The Signature Theatre Company's Lanford Wilson season continues with a new drama, in which a suspicious death disturbs the tranquillity of a small Midwestern town. Marshall Mason is the director. In previews. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES
A musical based on the 1967 Roman Polanski film, starring Michael Crawford, with music by Jim Steinman and a book by David Ives, Mr. Steinman, and Michael Kunze. John Rando is the director. In previews. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

DEBBIE DOES DALLAS
Sherie Rene Scott has the title role, in a stage adaptation, written by Erica Schmidt, of the classic porn film. In previews through Oct. 27. Opens Oct. 29 at 8. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

HOLLYWOOD ARMS
Linda Lavin, Michele Pawk, and Frank Wood lead the cast in a play based on Carol Burnett's memoir of her childhood, written by Ms. Burnett and her daughter, the late Carrie Hamilton. Harold Prince is the director. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LOVE IN THE AGE OF NARCISSISM
Seven hard-to-please New Yorkers look for romance, in a new comedy by Brad Desch. Previews begin Oct. 24. (Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515.)

MOVIN' OUT
Twyla Tharp's dance-musical, based on the songs of Billy Joel. Two previews on Oct. 23. Opens Oct. 24 at 6:30. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

ROOM TONE
The experimental theatre group Elevator Repair Service celebrates its tenth anniversary with a new production at P.S. 122. Oct. 25-27 at 7:30. Continues through Nov. 24. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

SON OF DRAKULA
David Drake ("The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me") unveils a new solo show. Previews begin Oct. 24. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			23	24	25	26
27	28	29				

STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!
Irving Berlin's 1915 musical is the season opener in this fall's Musicals Tonight series. Opens Oct. 23 at 2:30. (Y.M.H.A., 344 E. 14th St. 362-5620.)

WOYZECK
Tom Waits, Kathleen Brennan, and Robert Wilson have teamed up again to put a music-theatre spin on Georg Büchner's 1837 play. Oct. 29 at 7:30. Continues through Nov. 10. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AMOUR
James Lapine directs Malcolm Gets and Melissa Errico in a new musical by Michel Legrand (score) and Didier van Cauwelaert (book and lyrics). (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BAILEGANGAIRE
The Irish Repertory Theatre's staging of Tom Murphy's play stars Pauline Flanagan as a senile woman who never reaches the end of her nightly yarn about a local laughing contest. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

BETTY RULES
A kinetic alterna-rock musical, directed by Michael Greif ("Rent"), chronicling the nearly two-decade-long career of a real-life girl band called Betty and its members' long battle to keep the group and their sanity intact on the road, at home, onstage, and even in therapy. The group was formed in 1985 in the D.C. suburbs by two Jewish sisters—Elizabeth (an angry-funny redhead who looks like Laraine Newman) and Amy Ziff (zaftig, with blond dreads)—with Alyson Palmer, an African-American singer, bassist, and all-around bombshell. For an hour and a half, the women create a collage of scenes and songs that would resemble a good night on "Saturday Night Live" if the guest band were also to perform the skits. The ultra-mod Zipper is outfitted with car seating (complete with seat belts), and the set designer, Kevin Adams, has lit the place to perfectly reflect the group's energy. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BURNING BLUE
A fatal accident involving three F-18 jets is at the center of this drama by D. M. W. Greer. Chad Lowe leads the cast. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

BURN THIS
In Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama, an angry straight man meets his gay brother's roommates after his brother's death, forcing the characters to confront the lies they have told in their lives. The piece is too long, and feels longer still because half the characters are so badly drawn. Dallas Roberts, playing the gay roommate of the dead man, resorts to stale camping, and Catherine Keener's listless, flailing rendition of the other roommate shows no sign of the razor-sharp presence that she projects in her films. Ty Burrell delivers a likable performance as her rich, complacent boyfriend, Burton; but a much needed jolt of energy comes from the surviving brother, played brilliantly by Edward Norton. He's a great stage actor, an heir to the suave and psychologically riveting Frederic March. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

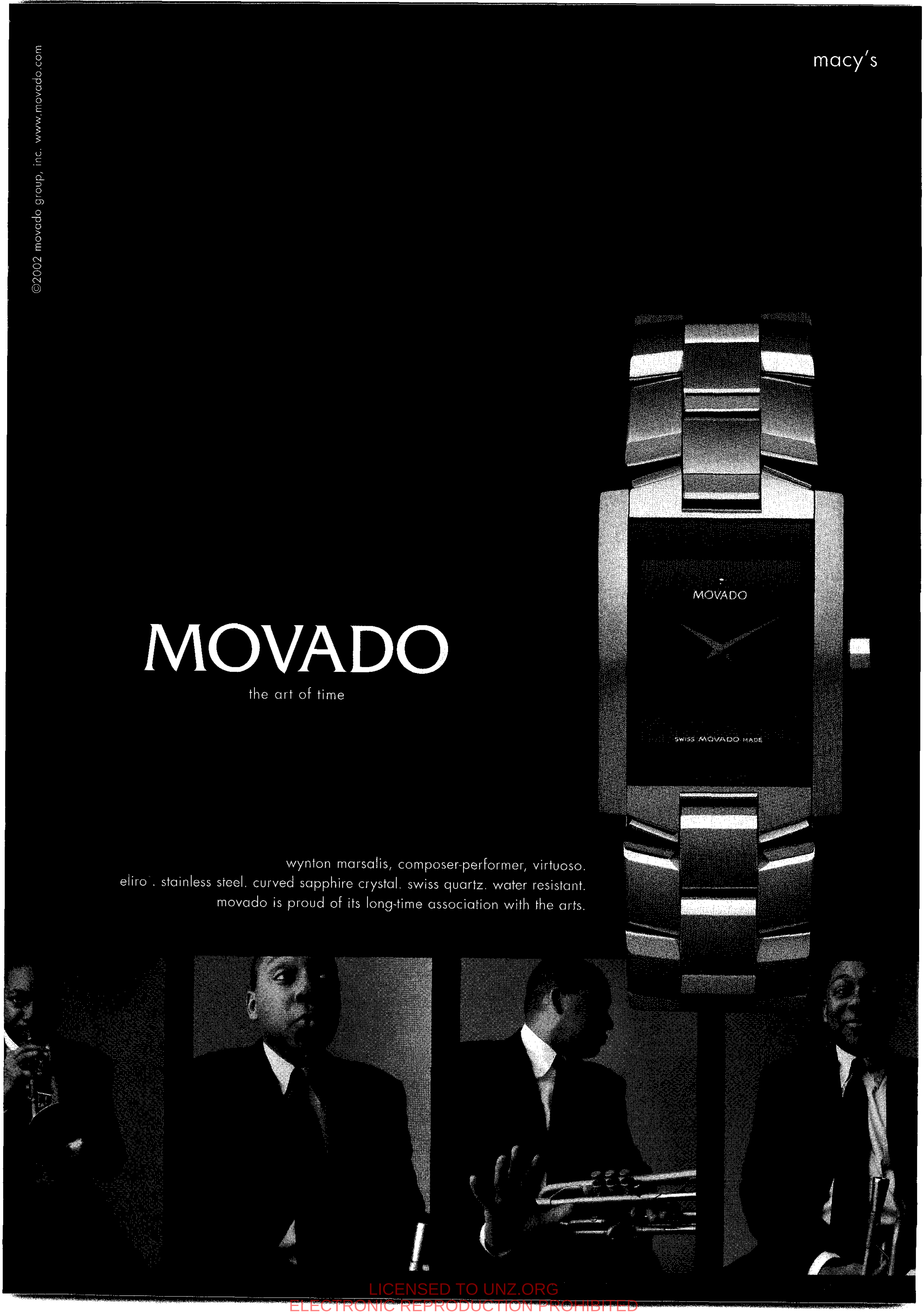
THE CHARITY THAT BEGAN AT HOME
In the Mint Theatre's production of St. John Hankin's 1906 comedy of manners, two well-meaning English society ladies, Lady Denison (Kristin Griffith) and her daughter, Margery (Harmony Schuttler), stock their country house with clueless staff and socially backward guests, yielding obvious comic consequences. The director, Gus Kaikkonen, could have caricatured these odd ducks; instead, he gives each actor the chance to express himself honestly, while Hankin's script leavens the laughter with a lively discussion of morality, responsibility, and forgiveness. Look for romance, insight on the British class system, and a surprisingly emotional dénouement. Among the excellent cast of twelve, Lee Moore stands out in his hilarious turn as General Bonsor, the dullest house guest in England. (311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Oct. 27.)

CHEAT
Two women lose their jobs at a munitions plant at the end of the Second World War, in a new drama by Julie Jensen. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The seven cast members mix remarkable range with insane energy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

THE EXONERATED
Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen's play about six people imprisoned on death row for crimes they did not commit. (Reviewed in this issue.) (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG
A revival of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, starring Lea Salonga and directed by Robert Longbottom, with a new book by David Henry Hwang. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)



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FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
The brilliant Edie Falco's star turn in Terence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life while struggling to embrace it is the best reason to see this derivative work, which owes a great deal to William Inge. With this performance, Falco joins the ranks of Laurette Taylor and Shirley Booth: great American actresses who garner audience sympathy through lyrical naturalism. Joe Mantello is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes combine to highlight the period artifacts in an ecstasy of gorgeous bad taste, offered with just enough invention to achieve lyrical wit. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad. Jack O'Brien is the director. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Melissa Errico and Malcolm Gets in "Amour," at the Music Box.

HAPPY DAYS
Joseph Chaikin directs Beckett's play at the theatre in which it premièred, in New York in 1961. With Joyce Aaron as Winnie and Ron Faber as Willie. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200. Closes Oct. 27.)

HARLEM SONG
Essentially a revue, using both old and new compositions, selected or written by the director George C. Wolfe and the show's talented music supervisors, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters. Like Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and the novels of Terry McMillan, it is a form of art whose aesthetic concerns are secondary to its desire to make "the people" feel good, about themselves and their community. The Harlem of "Harlem Song" is not an urban wasteland in the process of reinventing itself. It is a realm of legend and lore, and a mythical homeland, which it is our duty as theatregoers, as citizens, to celebrate. This is a point worth making, but not one that bears much repeating. (8/19 & 26/02) (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

IN REAL LIFE
Charlayne Woodard's one-woman show chronicles the time in her early twenties when she moved to New York City with stars in her eyes, intending to become a "serious" actress. Instead of performing in Chekhov's "Three Sisters," as she had hoped, Woodard finds herself starring opposite Nell Carter in "Ain't Misbehavin'," a Fats Waller musical revue. High points include Woodard's reënactment of the "Ain't Misbehavin'" audition, when she tried to prove that she could dance (although she never learned how), and her very funny rivalry with Nell Carter. Woodard performs her material enthusiastically, but, perhaps because she covers only a short time in her still young career, there isn't much depth to the life lessons she imparts. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

JOLSON & COMPANY
In their new play, Stephen Mo Hanan and Jay Berkow pay tribute to the great vaudeville songster and film actor Al Jolson. Hanan channels Jolson, singing fourteen of the songs he made famous, including "You Made Me Love You," "My Mammy," and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie, Goodbye." The songs emerge through the familiar device of an interview between a late-life Jolson and a radio host, in which the singer reminisces about his childhood, his career, and his four wives. The sixteen characters in Jolson's flashbacks are played by only two actors, Robert Ari and Nancy Anderson, and their adept transformations balance Hanan's inevitable hamminess. Anderson is especially agile, morphing into Al Jolson's dying mother or Mae West with a quick costume change and the slightest shift in accent. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

JULIUS CAESAR
The beginning of the Axis Company's production is played with the blandness of expression that you might expect from a corporate-training video, mixed with dopey Rome-by-way-of-Club-Med costumes. But around the time that Caesar is persuaded to go to the Senate on the Ides of March the actors turn up the heat. An imperial leader, sure of himself and feared by many of his citizens, is at the center of the play, but also of our daily news—be he American, Iraqi, or corporate chieftain. In a couple of short scenes, George Demas's Caesar draws the two eras together, and from that point on the evening is a vivid study in honor and its discontents. The cast is mixed, but Brian Barnhart's deviously grieving Antony and Jim Sterling's decent, confounded Brutus are very strong. Edgar Oliver's Casca provides a welcome spark throughout. Directed by Randy Sharp, with evocative sound design by Steve Fontaine. (One Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

LITTLE HAM
An encore production of a musical based on the Langston Hughes play of the same name, which was staged last fall by the Amas Musical Theatre. It has music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Richard Engquist and Mr. Woldin, and a book by Dan Owens. (10/7/02) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE
Roger Rees and Faith Prince star in a musical by Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics), based on the 1994 movie, set in Dublin in the sixties. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE MAYOR'S LIMO
A comedy by Mark Nassar ("Tony n' Tina's Wedding"), about a homeless man who finds himself at the center of a political war after he unwittingly urinates on the mayor's car during a demonstration. (Kraine, 85 E. 4th St. 352-3101.)

MY OLD LADY
Three seasoned performers—Siân Phillips and Jan Maxwell, who play an aged mother-daughter duo, and Peter Friedman, who plays an interloper in their closed world—hash out an unlikely but predictable drama, set, improbably, in Paris. Israel Horovitz's glib script disguises a bid for commercial appeal as a quest for personal identity, but he fools nobody. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Performances of Gotthold Lessing's eighteenth-century drama "Nathan the Wise," set in Jerusalem during the Crusades, run in repertory with Oliver Goldsmith's 1773 comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer." (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

PRUNE DANISH
Jackie Mason is back on Broadway with a new one-man show. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI
Al Pacino leads the cast in a National Actors Theatre staging of Brecht's comic parable about the rise of Hitler. Simon McBurney is the director. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 239-6280.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Rupert Holmes's touching and hilarious one-man tribute to the unsinkable George Burns and his more-than-a-sidekick wife, Gracie Allen, almost makes the audience feel more for the cigar-puffing comic in death than in life. As Burns, Frank Gorshin bonds with the audience through a steady string of jokes (some funny, others rueful) and the judicious use of a little soft-shoe. Like both "Yankee Doodle Dandy," the bio-pic of the vaudevillian George M. Cohan, and the sleight-of-hand artist Ricky Jay's card-trick shows, "Goodnight Gracie" is not just a showcase for one man; it's a showcase for an era. John Tillinger is the director. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE SHOW-OFF
A revival of George Kelly's 1924 comedy. (Metropolitan Playhouse, 220 E. 4th St. 995-5302. Closes Oct. 27.)

SPLIT
Michael Weller's comic drama about the breakup of a "perfect" couple. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

TAKE ME OUT
From London's Donmar Warehouse, a new play by Richard Greenberg, in which a heroic baseball player comes out to the press. Joe Mantello is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

TEDDY TONIGHT!
Laurence Luckinbill stars in his own solo play about Teddy Roosevelt. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 206-1515.)

YELLOWMAN
Dael Orlandersmith wrote and co-stars in this drama about the complicated relationship between a dark-skinned black woman and a light-skinned black man (Howard W. Overshown). (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL 2002
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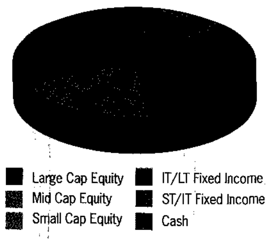

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TABLES FOR TWO

SPA 88
88 Fulton St. (766-8600)—Spa 88 is not Bliss (or bliss); it's a Russian bathhouse. With its desultory juice bar, mirrored halls, and racks of rubber sandals, the damp and subterranean hangout can seem at times like a parody of a certain kind of health club, but in the end there's nothing clever about a good steam—or a good meal. The restaurant, if you can call it that, is just upstairs from the swimming pool. It's a panelled room no bigger than a trailer, with a TV in one corner and—though alcohol is not served—a neon Bud Light sign in another. "My uncle is distributor," the waiter says with a shrug. "It's nice light."

You may dine while dressed in a bathrobe, if you like; in fact, you may stop by the restaurant to order, then head downstairs to dawdle for a while in the steam room and the sauna. By the cold-water dipping pool, Eugene, in a Speedo, might offer *platza*—a therapeutic flogging with a hot bundle of oak leaves. It is better on an empty stomach, he says, "but if you must eat first don't eat too much." Back upstairs, it quickly becomes clear that this will not be easy. An abundant layout awaits: cuts of pickled herring, with tomato, cucumber, onions, and olives; a bowl of Olivier, a potato-and-egg salad mixed with carrots, capers, dill, and mayo; *kharcho*, a light lamb soup, with hunks of meat, seasoned with paprika; lumpy borscht; a cup of *ikra* (salmon roe). Sauces correspond to certain dishes, but ignorance yields lively combinations. In place of beer, the spa offers up *kvas*, a nonalcoholic Russian soda, which looks and tastes like Coke mixed with stout. The other diners, mostly Russian men in V-neck sweaters and leather jackets, pay no heed to the *mestnye* in sandals and terrycloth robes. Infomercials spool by on TV.

Soon decision time arrives, with more platters. What will it be, the *platza* or the blintz? A sound thrashing, or a Cornish hen, cooked on a double-sided grill, and a plate of Siberian *pelmeni* (tortellini-like dumplings)? Within minutes, your restorative outing has turned gluttonous; what you have just sweated out you are now taking in. Later, you see Eugene again, and mutter something about having to cancel the *platza* appointment. "Is okay," he says. "I understand."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

Molly Lambert's curtain-raiser, "An Ice Cream Man for All Seasons," directed by Jeremy Dobrish, is the most exuberant of the plays. Lauren Gunderson's "Parts They Call Deep," directed by Brett W. Reynolds, portrays a dreamy voyage of self-discovery made by three generations of women in a Winnebago. Caroline V. McGraw's "Trade," directed by Valentina Fratti, whips up a melodrama of drugs, money, and male-female power plays. But Lambert's "Ice Cream Man" has a decidedly less serious agenda. On a winter's day in Central Park, two rival venders, one who sells ice cream (Keith Davis) and one who sells hot dogs (Jonathan Sale), rise to climactically silly heights in a nicely choreographed duel, with wiener and Fudgsicle as the chosen weapons. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Oct. 22 at 8: "A Tribute to George Harrison," the première of "Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra," by Robert Hill, and "Fancy Free." ♦ Oct. 23 at 8: "Clear," the première of ". . . Smile with My Heart," by Lar Lubovitch, and "Symphony in C." ♦ Oct. 24 at 8: "Clear," "Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra," and "Offenbach in the Underworld." ♦ Oct. 25 at 8: ". . . Smile with My Heart," "Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra," and "Offenbach in the Underworld," a treasure chest of character dancing choreographed in 1954 by Antony Tudor. The piece is set in a Second Empire Paris café where, magically, the usual class prohibitions don't apply. Off-duty washerwomen take turns smooching a duke before slipping into a gloriously crude cancan. A scruffy painter sends a sweet, errant débutante in a delicate arc over his head. And the Queen of the Carriage Trade waltzes up and down the social ladder, toying with every man in the joint. "Her eyes are everywhere," says the piquant Monique Meunier, recently of New York City Ballet, where she was generally kept in hiding; this evening she makes her A.B.T. début as the Queen. "It's a fun character to play—because when else are you going to get a chance?" ♦ Oct. 26 at 2: ". . . Smile with My Heart," "Grand Pas Classique," "Sylvia Pas de Deux," and "Offenbach in the Underworld." ♦ Oct. 26 at 8: ". . . Smile with My Heart," "Sin and Tonic," and "A Tribute to George Harrison." ♦ Oct. 27 at 2: "Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra," "The Garden of Villandry," "Grand Pas Classique," and "Offenbach in the Underworld." ♦ Oct. 27 at 7:30: "Clear," "Sin and Tonic," and "A Tribute to George Harrison." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

GRUPO CORPO
The company from Belo Horizonte, Brazil, brings two works, "21" and "O Corpo," that show off its typical hybrid blend of ballet, African movement, and South American rhythms. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 22 and Oct. 24-26 at 7:30.)

PARSONS DANCE COMPANY
The ten-member troupe returns with repertory works and four premières: "Stand Back," by Katarzyna Skarpetowska, "Gloria," by Lila York, and "Too Many Cooks!" and "Tango Oficina," by the company's founder, David Parsons. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 22 at 7:30, Oct. 23-25 at 8, Oct. 26 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 27 at 2 and 7:30. Through Nov. 3.)

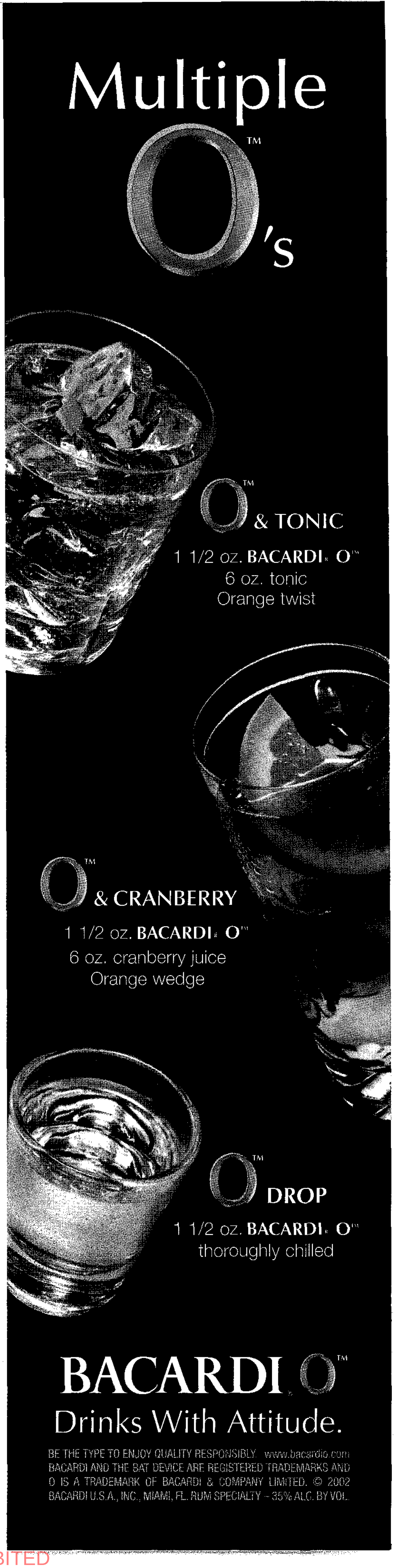
"SOULAR POWER'D"
The mind-bogglingly adept head-spinner Gabriel (Kwikstep) Dionisio, who directs this fifteen-person hip-hop extravaganza with his wife, Anita (Rokafella) Garcia, spent most of his childhood in foster homes, bouncing from Ozone Park, Queens, to Red Hook, Brooklyn. "So I was never really down for one clique," he says. "Breaking is all about who's known—you know, the name on your shirt. But I was with people—at block parties and community centers and basement parties—who didn't have any names and who were talented." "Soular Power'd" shares the loose, celebratory spirit of those low-profile parties, with casually excellent conga drumming, turntabling, rapping, and, as one character in the show puts it, "beating, hopping, locking, and up-rising." (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Oct. 24-25 at 7, Oct. 26 at 2 and 7, and Oct. 27 at noon and 5. Through Nov. 3.)

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
Barbara Bryan, Claude-Andrée Louissaint, and Julie Rose each curate a night of dance in a series benefitting neighborhood food-distribution programs. Admission is half price if you bring two cans of food. (Danspace Project, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Oct. 25-27 at 8:30.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

ELVIS COSTELLO
Costello's most recent album, "When I Was Cruel," purports to return him to his roots as a sharply cynical songsmith; in truth, it demonstrates that his musical appetite has never been more omnivorous. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 307-7171. Oct. 22-23 at 8.)

RUSH
Returning after a five-year hiatus (following the untimely deaths of the drummer Neil Peart's wife



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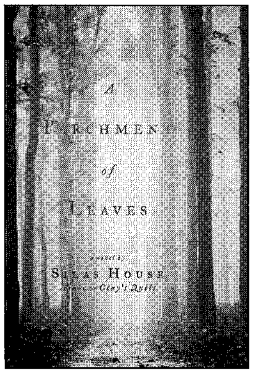

"Silas House writes as if the whole history of his place and people resides within his heart, and I believe it does. *A Parchment of Leaves* is a beautiful, heartbreaking novel." —BRAD WATSON

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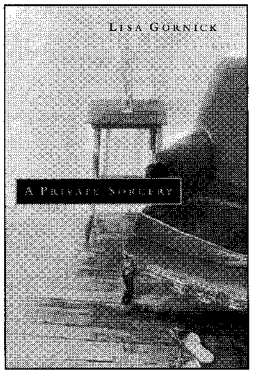
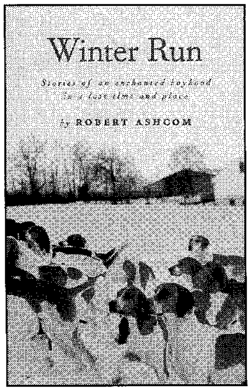


"*A Private Sorcery* is a wonderfully honest book, deeply-felt, with characters carved from the true stuff of what we are."—COLUM MCCANN

ROBERT ASHCOM



"I strongly commend *Winter Run*, knowing it will move you, certain it will bring you joy."—GEORGE GARRETT

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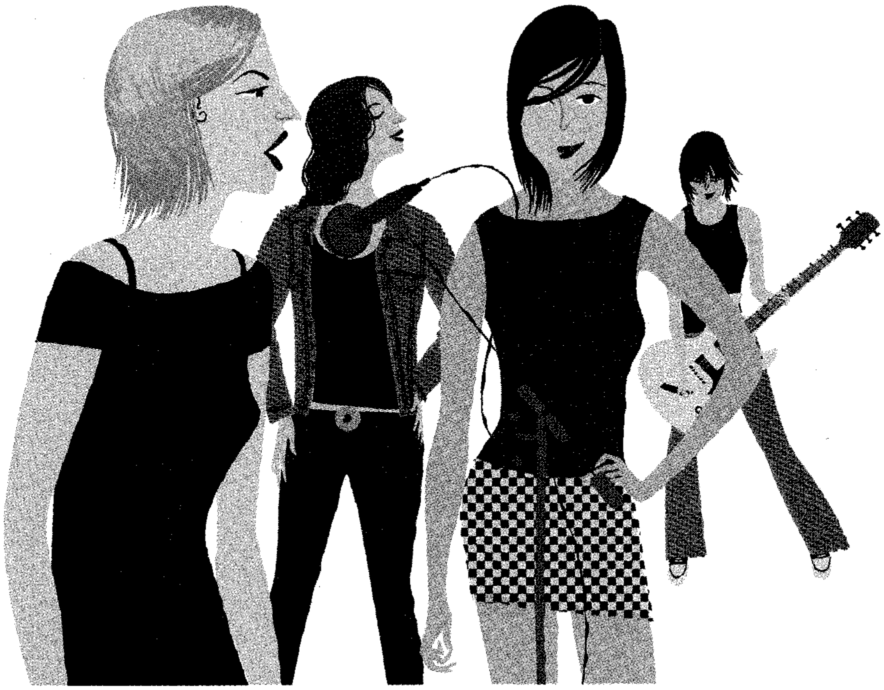
and daughter), Canada's refreshingly fashion-oblivious power trio is back to business as usual, touring behind a new album, "Vapor Trails" (randomly selected lyric: "I wasn't walking with angels / I was talking to myself"). (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Oct. 24 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
There have been cowboys in Hawaii since the early nineteenth century. And, like their North American brothers, they have their own brand of guitar playing: slack key, wherein the strings are tuned down to a low and moaning open chord that makes the instrument snap, buzz, and gurgle like a Jew's harp in an empty saloon. This potentially beautiful evening features Led Kaapana, Princess Owana Salazar, and guest dancers. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 545-7536. Oct. 27 at 7.)



Sweden's Sahara Hotnights rolls into Southpaw this week.

JOSÉ LUIS MERINO

ALICE COOPER
Though positively quaint and not just a little campy by today's standards, the shock-rock pioneer continues to make a macabre spectacle of himself. He may no longer strike fear in the hearts of straitlaced America the way he did during his mid-seventies heyday (especially given his current status as a golf-club-swingin' teetotaller and restaurateur), but Cooper and his black-humored showmanship still pack the house. (Beacon Theatre. Oct. 29 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Oct. 23: **Sam Moore** is best known as half of the seminal soul duo Sam & Dave, but Moore might have achieved more individual fame if thirty-odd years ago his début solo album, "Plenty Good Lovin'," had seen the light of day (it was long thought lost in a 1972 warehouse fire). A few years ago the master tape reappeared, and the album was finally released this summer. Oct. 26: The **Hot House Flowers.** At the tail end of the eighties, these bright young hopefuls from Dublin served up a folksy blend of Celtic rock that won them comparisons to their fellow-countrymen U2. Unlike that rock juggernaut, however, the Flowers never achieved massive Stateside success, and remain a club act on these shores.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Oct. 26: The last time the British folksinger **Linda Thompson** toured the United States, the Reagan Administration was frantically hiring air-traffic controllers and the longest bull market in postwar history was just getting started. After a twenty-year absence, Thompson returns with songs from her new album, "Fashionably Late," which features backing vocals by her ex-husband, Richard, and wonderfully understated guitar work by her son, **Teddy.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Oct. 25: Crazy, industrial-strength rockabilly with the **Reverend Horton Heat.** Oct. 26-27: The **Soft Boys** date back to the cantankerous birth of British punk, but their charmingly eccentric front man, Robyn Hitchcock, was more likely to sing about Anglepoise lamps than about anarchy. The willfully unfashionable group—which filtered the psychedelic sensibilities of early Pink Floyd and the jangle of the Byrds through the manic energy of the times—was back on the road last year after a twenty-year hiatus to celebrate the rerelease of their seminal album "Underwater Moonlight." They return yet again with songs from their brand-new album, "Nextdoorland."

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Oct. 25-27: The girl-rocker magazine *Chickfactor* celebrates its tenth anniversary with three nights of its favorite underground pop. The first evening features the Olympia, Washington, outfit **Lois** and the London duo **Pipas,** among others. The following night belongs to the local trio **Pacific Ocean,** London's **Would Be Goods,** and **All Girl Summer Fun Band** and their sweet harmonies. The **Future Bible Heroes,** featuring Stephin Merritt and Claudia Gonson of the Magnetic Fields; San Francisco's **Aislers;** and the Chicago chamber-pop outfit the **Aluminum Group** take over on closing night. Oct. 29: The diminutive Los Angeles-based musician **Mia Doi Todd** sings softly about personal moments ("I sit down on the bidet / and shower my flower of the decay / that sets in when she lets in a guest") with a voice as haunting as her subject matter. With Todd's college buddy, the sensitive and prolific Arkansan troubadour **Jason Morphew.** The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Oct. 28: The **Mighty Mighty Bosstones.** Undaunted by the apparent demise of the nineties neo-ska boom, Boston's favorite party band continues to perform in all of its glorious horn-honking clamor. Dicky Barrett, the Bosstones' charismatic, leather-larynxed rogue of a front man, is a master of sheer showmanship.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Oct. 25: The ten-piece Haitian ensemble **Boukman Eksperyans.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Oct. 23: **Songs: Ohia** and **Damien Jurado,** a double bill of singer-songwriters with solemnly affecting voices and preoccupations with death and depression. Jason Molina, of Songs, has evolved from an alt-country caricature into a satisfyingly complex writer, while Jurado can alternately channel a "Nebraska"-era Bruce Springsteen or a more energetic pop-punker.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Oct. 26: The **Reverend Horton Heat** (see the Bowery Ballroom). Oct. 27-28: The **Streets** is Mike Skinner, a young man from Birmingham, England, whose latest album, "Original Pirate Material," is full of catchy hip-hop beats and Skinner's raps about the concerns of the average English youth: drinking, PlayStation, and getting high. This is his first American tour.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope (718-230-0236)—Oct. 26: **Mary Lou Lord.** Perhaps the world's most successful subway busker, this Boston singer, who specializes (like most buskers) in other people's material, returns after taking time off to have a child. She's got a crystal-clear voice and a strong way with the audience. Oct. 27: Two of the more often dropped names in the rock-revival pantheon, the local favorites **Mooney Suzuki** and the Swedish rocker babes **Sahara Hotnights** deliver sweaty sets of energetic garage rock that more than explain what the buzz is all about.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Oct. 23: The **Reverend Horton Heat** (see the Bowery Ballroom). Oct. 25: **Popa Chubby** (né Ted Horowitz) is a Bronx-born blues guitarist with a towering physique to match his stage name. Chubby, who earlier in his career toured with the punk innovator Richard Hell and during the nineties led the house band at the now defunct East Side juke joint Manny's Car Wash, is a proponent of what he calls the New York City blues.

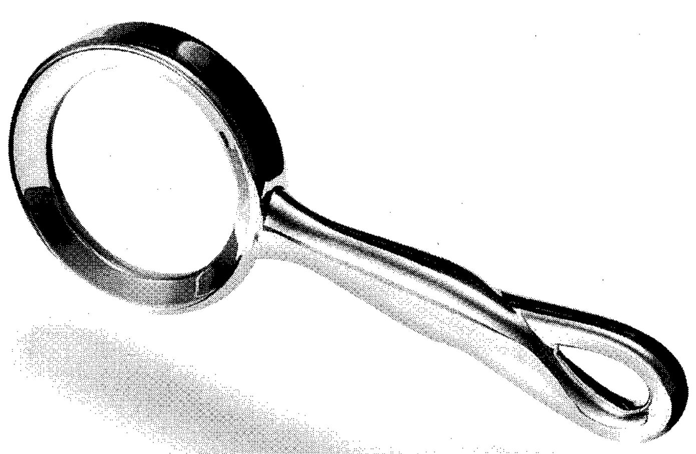
WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—Oct. 28: The all-female, post-punk trio **Sleater-Kinney** makes raw, injured pop out of raucous guitar noise and near-bubblegum hooks.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Oct. 23: **Barbara Carroll's** authentic bebop piano (when she was young, Carroll drew attention on Fifty-second Street, where the likes of Charlie Parker would sit in with her), subtle vocalizing, and encyclopedic knowledge of standards make for a civilizing night out. Oct. 25-26: **Kenny Rankin's** voice is still sweet and his swing light and sure, as proved by his pleasing new disk, "A Song for You," which mixes classic standard fare with such "new standards" as "Spanish Harlem" and "I've Just Seen a Face."

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Oct. 25: The **Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars.** The spirit of unadulterated bebop lives on in this conglomerate ensemble that joins illustrious veterans from various Gillespie bands, including the saxophonist James Moody, the trombonist Slide Hampton, and the trumpeter Jon Faddis.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the door-



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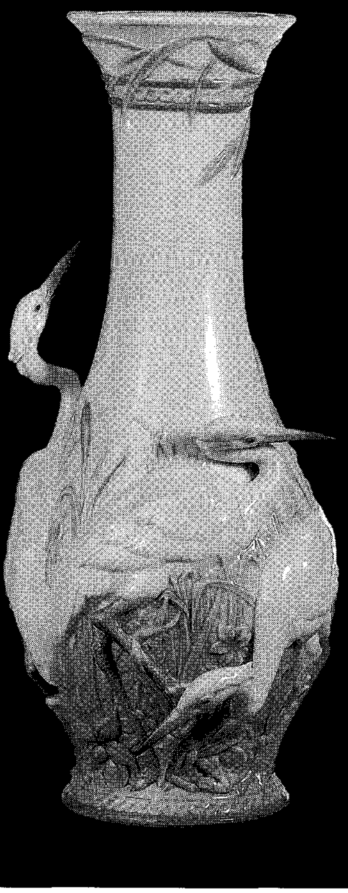

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Shown: Herons' Realm vase, $690. © 2002 Lladró USA, Inc.

man district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the **Loston Harris** trio is in attendance.

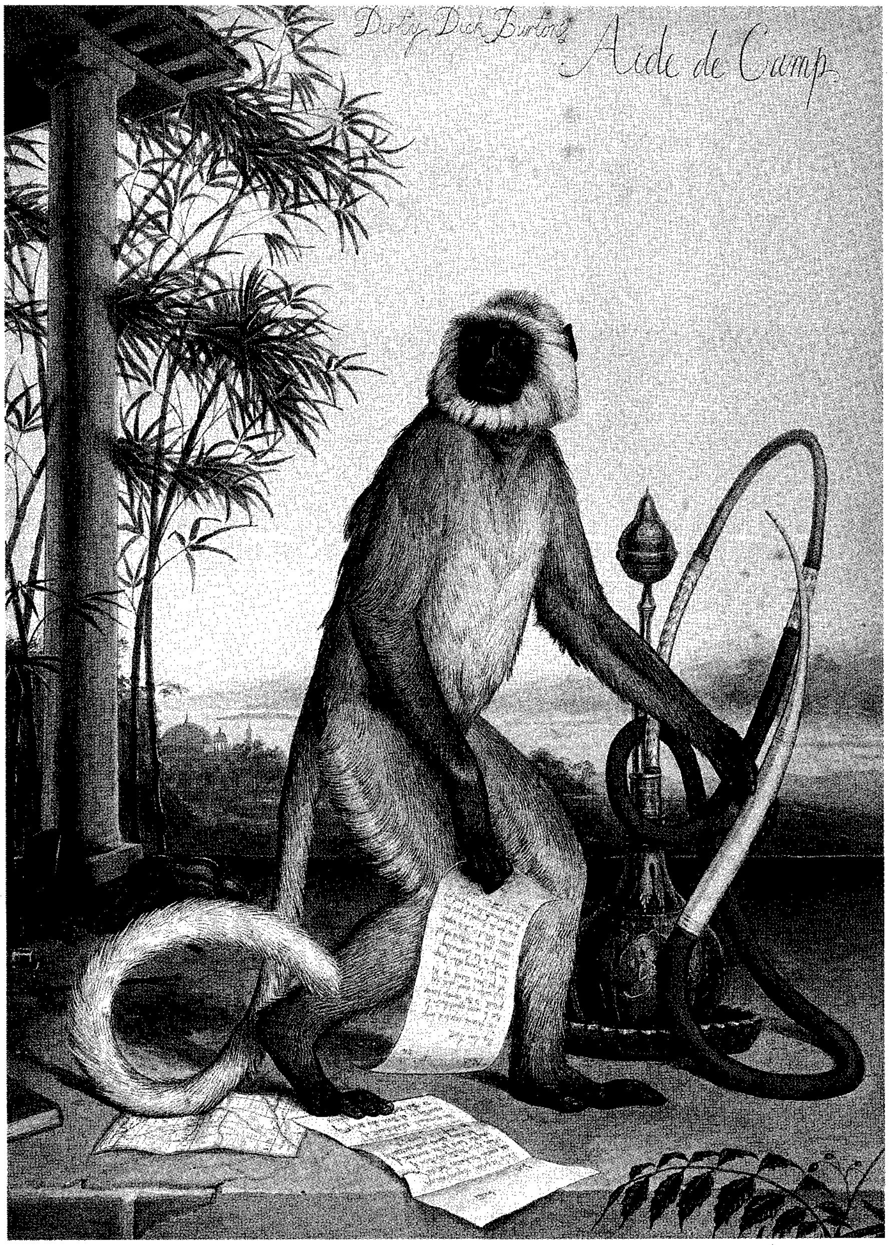
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Oct. 27: On her latest delicious album, "This Is New," the singer **Dee Dee Bridgewater** revitalizes the work of Kurt Weill, bringing her rhythmic moxie and warm spirit to everything from "Alabama Song" to "September Song." Her undervalued status is becoming a jazz crime. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Oct. 27: The **Larry Goldings** trio. No one is going to confuse Goldings with Jimmy Smith, or even with Baby Face Willette, for that matter, but he has enough funk in his fingers to convince you that the electric organ can be a witty, pungent instrument. He's got a good thing going with the guitarist **Peter Bernstein** and the drummer **Bill Stewart.** Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Oct. 27: The **Kenny Barron** sextet. With the death of Tommy Flanagan, Barron may now have assumed the role of dean of modern jazz pianists. Some of his most bracing work is done in the company of his sextet, an occasional unit that usually features a characteristic hard-bop-style tenor-sax-and-trumpet front line yet soars beyond the parameters of the form. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Richard Avedon, the only photographer to be played by Fred Astaire in a Hollywood musical ("Funny Face," from 1956), returns to the site of his 1978 retrospective. The hundred and eighty portraits, dating from the forties (an anonymous Sicilian boy in a state of barely suppressed mania) to last year (Harold Bloom with his eyes closed, radiating lassitude), make up a sort of idiosyncratic American *Who's Who.* Poets, painters, drifters, and politicos stand simply and stare into the lens. With Avedon's blank white background behind them, there's nowhere to hide, and the result is an intimacy that's both confrontational and preternaturally delicate. Backlight creeps around the edges of heads; by contrast, facial features darken, and niches and wrinkles seem triple-etched. Avedon's look is largely a matter of extreme values, but the secret of his superbright whites and velvety blacks is that they reinvent grays—as something rare, fugitive, and cherishable. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



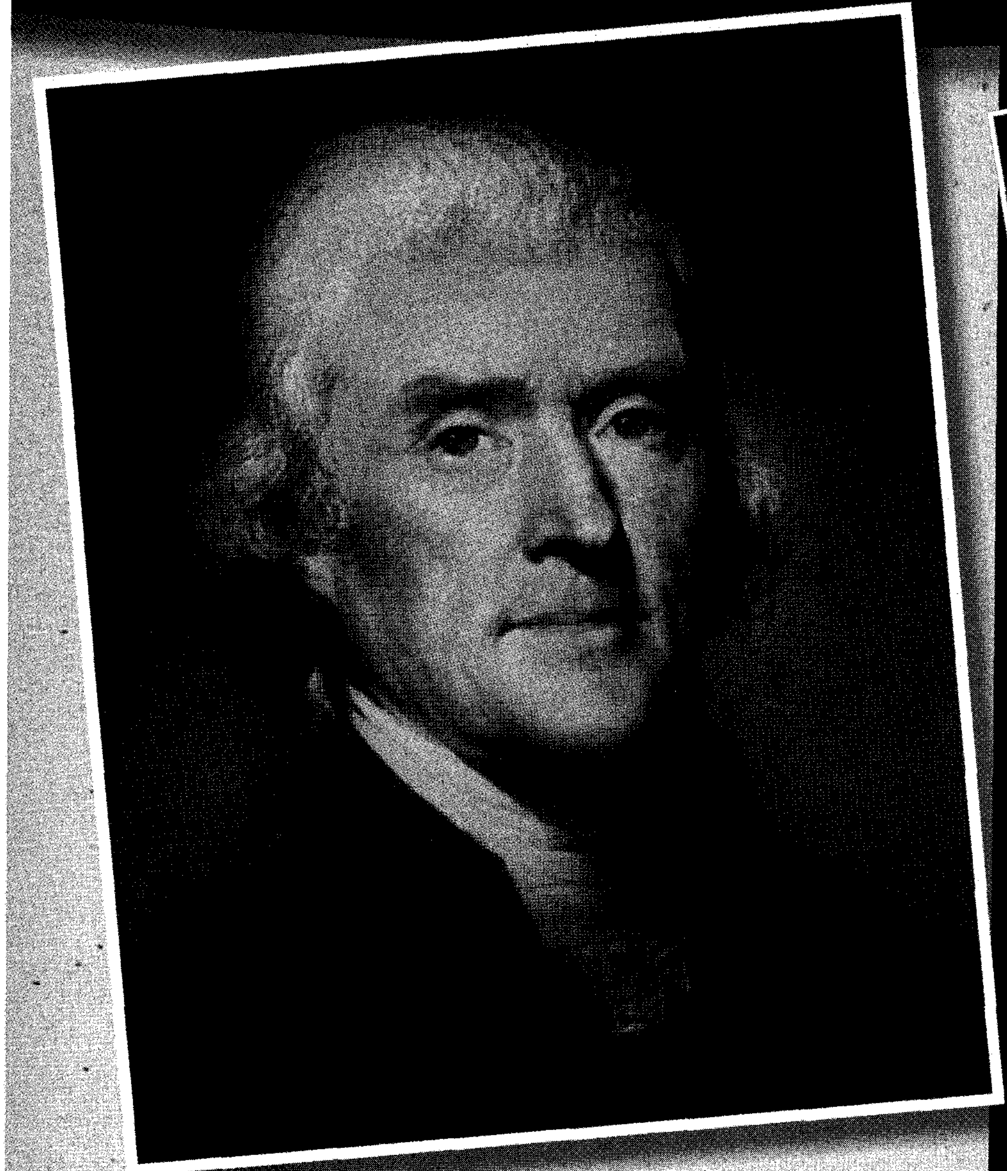
"Dirty Dick Burton's Aide-de-Camp," by Walton Ford, at Kasmin.

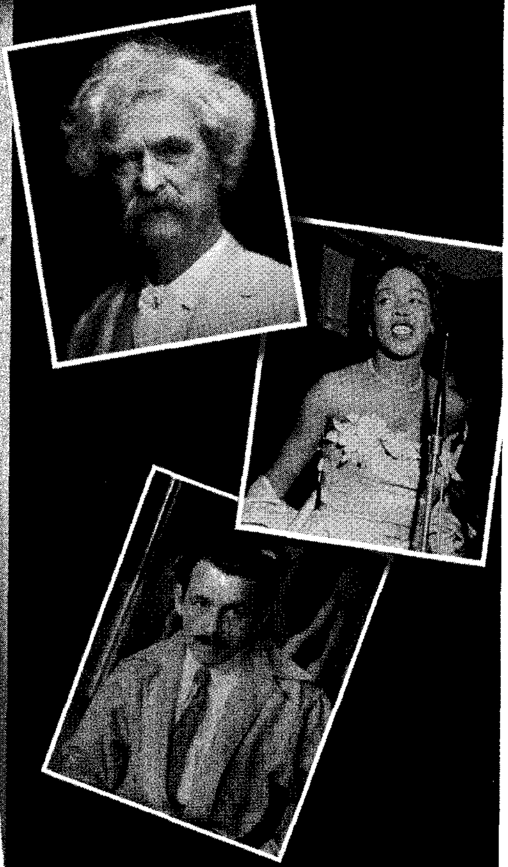
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (708-9480)—The museum's new home, until 2005, presents a slew of shows perfect for its big warehouse of a space, including the ongoing **"To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection."** (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Hollywood disaster flick meets Renaissance fresco (think "The Poseidon Adventure" with art direction by Fra Angelico) in **"Going Forth by Day,"** Bill Viola's visually striking five-channel video piece commissioned by a German bank for the Guggenheim Berlin. In one projection, an eclectic procession traipses through a light-dappled forest (the panoramic image evokes old-fashioned CinemaScope). In an adjacent scene, water gushes from the windows and doors of a pristine building façade. Death and resurrection figure elsewhere in the action, as Viola tackles Big Themes. The work was conceived before the events of September 11th, and the portent of disaster is uncanny, if you can handle the smugly pious tone. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—In Helen Mirra's installation, **"Declining Interval Lands,"** small rectangles of felt, in colors that shift from leaf to moss, lie stitched together on the gallery floor—it's Carl Andre by way of Mr. Green Jeans. A slender ribbon of cloth winds along the gallery wall at eye level, printed with lines of text borrowed from Beckett, an 1823 timber guide, and a Quaker philosopher (to name just three), but its empty segments better echo the show's mournful tone. A bench and an ambient-sound piece complete Mirra's installation, which alludes to Dutch-elm disease and, by extension, to all unanticipated loss, in a kind of melancholy minimalism. Through Dec. 8. ♦ **"Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk,"** carnivalesque architectural drawings from the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, and the Menil Collection. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Judy Chicago's monumental installation **"The Dinner Party"**—a delta-shaped banquet table for thirty-nine worthies from Primordial Goddess to Georgia O'Keeffe—comes from an era when women were wimmin. When the piece was completed, in 1979 (with the help of more than four hundred needleworkers and ceramicists), the sexual equipment pictured in the banquet plates shocked viewers, who found it either too explicit or too reductive. The work languished in storage. Now part of the museum's permanent collection, it looks wonderful—brilliantly colorful, poignantly bygone, but nevertheless a bona-fide triumph of scale and allegory. Through Feb. 9. ♦ **"Exposed: The Victorian Nude,"** from Tate Britain, is a strong historical show about an era when jumpiness about sex had bizarre effects in art. Literary and classical themes provided the alibis for displaying naked females. Popular guises included Shakespearean fairies, virtuous heroines (Lady Godiva rides again, and again), Roman decadents, and the like. For male nakedness, the excuse was propaganda for robust healthiness. Lust lurked, and smut reigned. A turn toward frankness around the turn of the century—in the gloomy nudes of Walter Sickert and the too little known William Orpen—offers a fresh invention: actual people. Orpen's felicitously titled "The English Nude" (1900), a Rembrandtesque tour de force, presents a regular,





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Thomas Jefferson, painting by Rembrandt Peale, White House Historical Association. *Mark Twain*, Mark Twain House, Hartford, CT. *Sarah Vaughn*, Frank Driggs Collection. *Thomas Hart Benton*, Peter A. Juley & Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

NOVEMBER 18 & 25
MARK TWAIN

DECEMBER 2
JAZZ

DECEMBER 9
EMPIRE OF THE AIR:
THE MEN WHO MADE RADIO

DECEMBER 16
THOMAS HART BENTON

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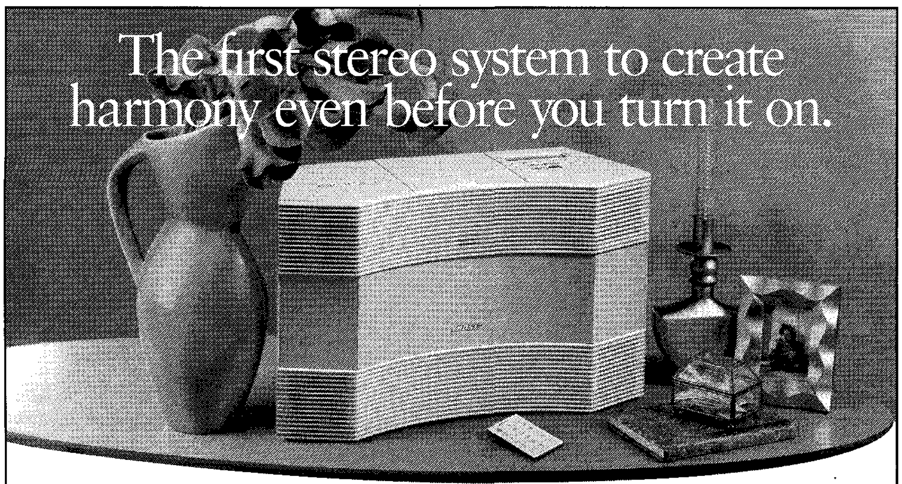

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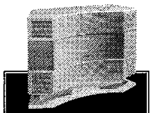

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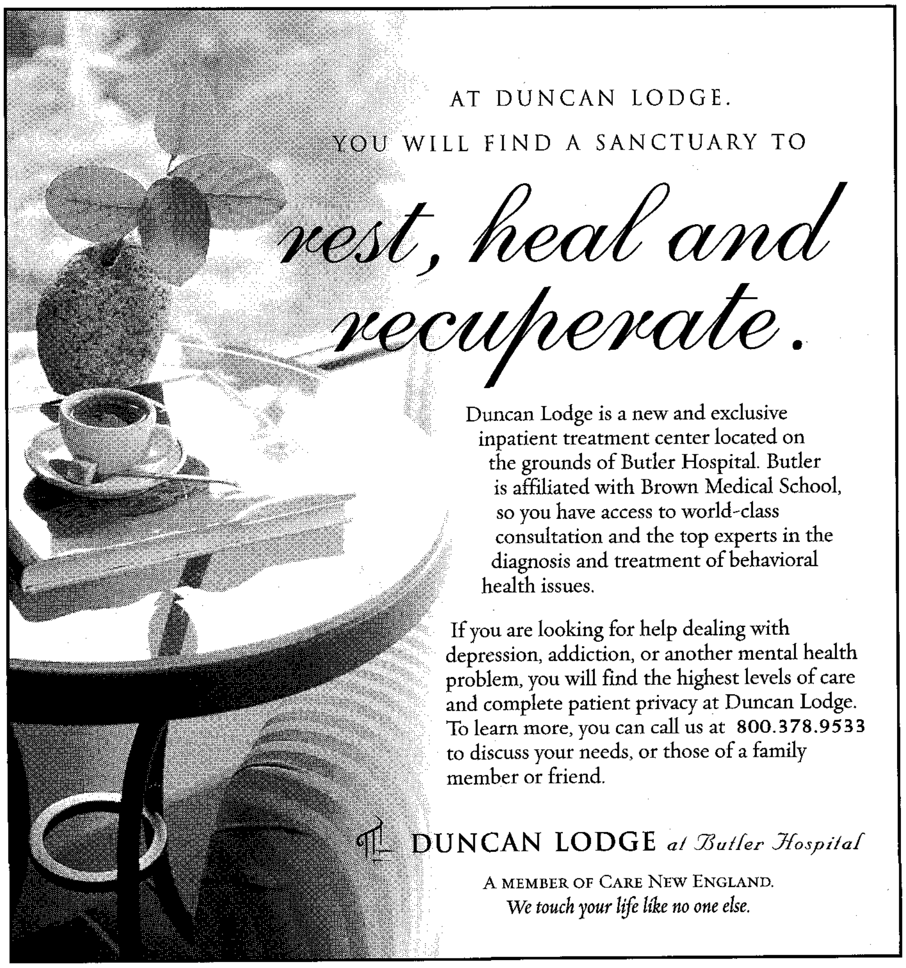

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interesting woman on a rumpled bed. Its mystery is that of really lived life. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (288-6400)—The overlap between Aboriginal "dreaming" traditions and Western modernism doesn't get any more startling than the handsome mural that confronts visitors in the opening room of **"The Native Born."** The broad stripe pattern painted on-site by Neville Gulaygulay seems eerily close to Sol LeWitt's wall drawings. Presumably, the connection is entirely accidental: Gulaygulay comes from the remote settlement of Ramingining, on the northern coast of Australia, as do the hundred and fifty bark paintings and wood sculptures in this touring collection. The works represent a veritable field guide to animal, vegetable, and geometric motifs. Accompanying texts (and a dense catalogue) describe the relevant landscapes and mythologies, along with the background of colonial injustices and burgeoning civil rights. Skeptical viewers may notice another parallel with conceptualism: engaging ideas accompanied by likable, unspectacular art. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (864-4500)—A dashing show of works made since 1995 confirms Gary Simmons's eminence among artists of political bent and installational panache. The thirty-eight-year-old's signature style of smeared-chalk-and-charcoal drawings has grown steadily subtler, lately favoring poetic images—clouds, stars, fir trees, roller coasters, a gazebo—whose meanings hang fire. The effect is laconic, heart-tugging, and elegant. A vast "blackboard" wall drawing of two toppling or, perhaps, flying skyscrapers alludes to September 11th, tenderly: the images suggest ghosts or angels of buildings. Elsewhere, Simmons, who has left off skewering stereotypes of African-Americans, indulges in some stereotyping of his own. Large sculptures of a moonshine still and a pair of clownish but menacing hillbillies, rendered as motorized bobble-head dolls, make fun of backwoods white culture in the South. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

PRESTON DICKINSON
The Precisionist painter (1889-1930) hasn't had a solo show in New York since the Whitney organized a retrospective on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. In this small, well-chosen show, Dickinson's ardent admiration for Cézanne comes out in a watercolor of country barns and a rectilinear still-life of fruit. A group of grain-elevator drawings show him off better: the sketchy elegance of the rendering forms a graceful counterpoint to the subject. Nearby, a witty still-life with cocktail shaker and cognac mimics the lofty verticals of the industrial buildings in the painting beside it. Through Oct. 26. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

MARIA ELENA GONZALEZ
Electrical towers and, by association, power, hazard, and vulnerability are the subjects of this spare and elegant installation. Fourteen small works on paper look like drawings but are in fact digitally manipulated photographs. The images, portrayed in negative as ghostly white forms floating on black backgrounds, hang in a row, like birds on a wire. In the center of the room, a miniature glass tower rests on a plywood pedestal across from a filigreed "drawing" made from the artist's fingernail clippings laid out on black cloth. Through Nov. 3. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.)

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Mitch Albom's
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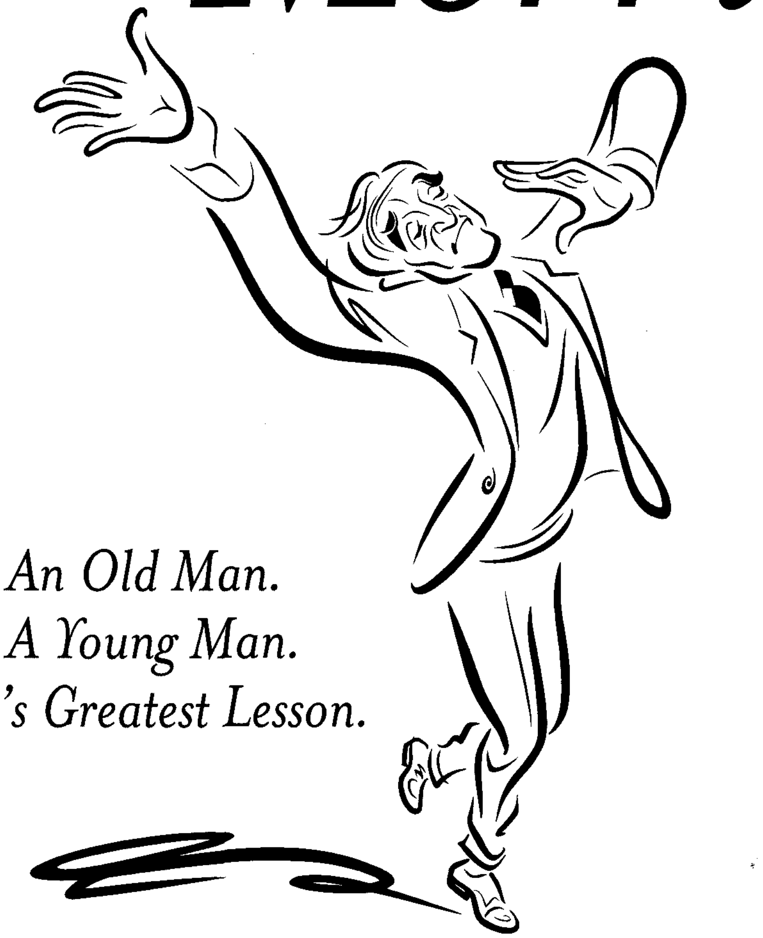

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Dear Theater Lover:

When David Singer asked me to join him in producing the stage version of the wonderful bestseller TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE, I said yes right away. Then I thought about why.

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There's a line from Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*: "The happiest times — now, always!" Morrie Schwartz, who was the very embodiment of that philosophy, would have given that line a standing ovation.

Now, Morrie himself is on stage, teaching us the same lessons that inspired over 5 million readers: **Live each moment joyfully. Enjoy each moment to the fullest. Remember what really matters.**

I look forward to seeing you at the Minetta Lane Theatre.

Sincerely,

Liz McCann

Liz McCann,
Producer

PHOTO: DIXIE SHERIDAN

Jon Tenney as Mitch Albom and Alvin Epstein as Morrie Schwartz

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IN PERSON: Beginning October 22, take this insert to the Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. Box Office Hours: Tue-Sun 1pm–6pm.

ONLINE: Visit Ticketmaster.com. Select desired performance date, enter code **MNYINSRT1** in the promotions and Special Offers box and select $65 best available ticket.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE: Tues–Fri at 8pm, Sat at 3 & 8pm, Sun at 3 & 7pm. Previews begin Friday, November 1, 2002. Opens Tuesday, November 19.

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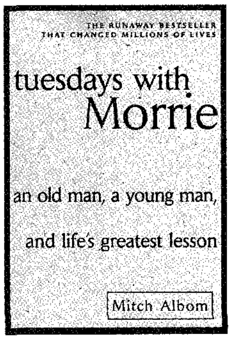

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Limit 8 tickets per order. All sales final – no refunds or exchanges. This offer not applicable to previously purchased tickets. Subject to availability and prior sale. Blackout dates may apply. Holiday performance schedule may vary. No performance Saturday Nov. 2nd at 3pm. Limited number of tickets available at this price for each performance. Offer may be revoked at any time.

JUAN MUÑOZ
The Public Art Fund often installs a sculpture just outside the Scholar's Gate, at the southeast corner of Central Park. The current leaseholder is "Conversation Piece," a quintet of bronze figures by the Spanish artist Juan Muñoz (1953-2001), occupying a sliver of space between the carriage drivers, the pretzel venders, and the park-bench crowd. Muñoz's figures are just smaller than human scale. Their hands are gloved and their eyes pinched shut, but they grasp at each other and incline their heads as if desperate to communicate. Their eloquent poses feel like gestures in commedia dell'arte—both broadly comical and terribly sad. Through March, 2003. (Fifth Ave. at 59th St.)

Short List

MARKUS LÜPERTZ
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through Nov. 16.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

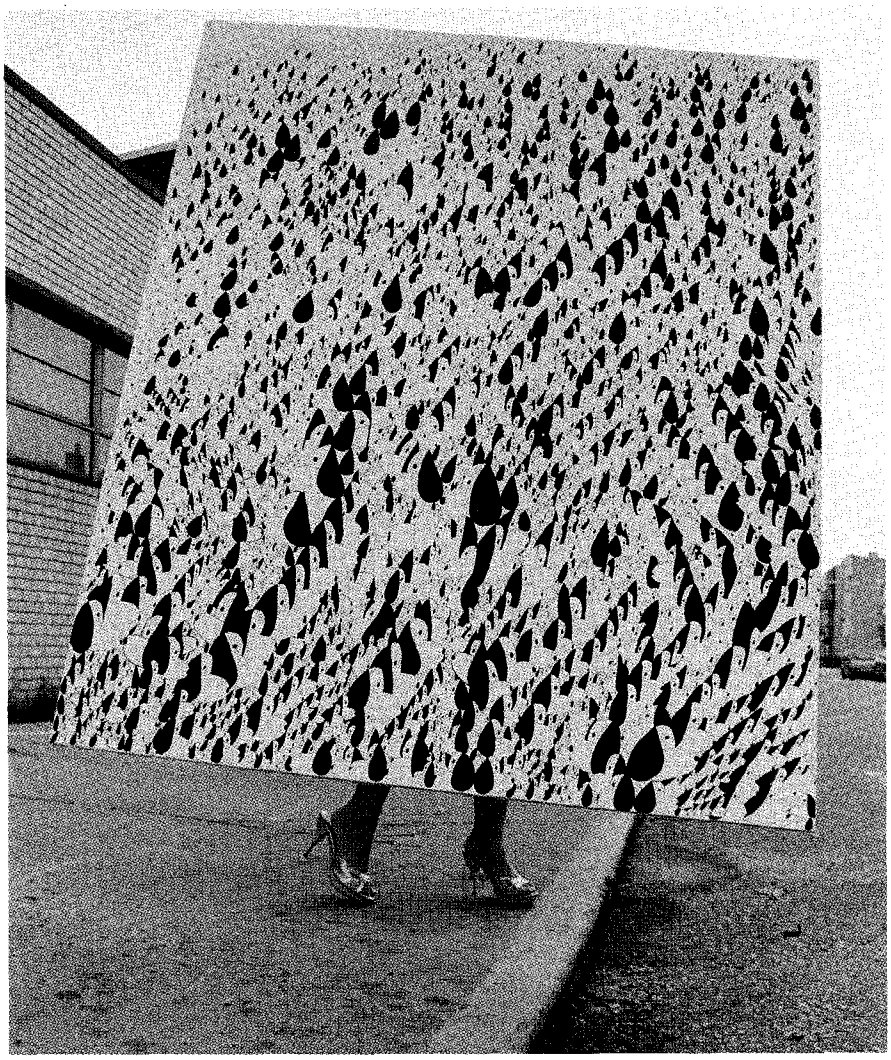
NINA BOVASSO
The artist long ago laid claim to the doodle as her signature mark—in this show, "Vir Heroicus Snoopicus," they're all Snoopy heads. She's organized her Snoopys into increasingly vast and seething crowds—she's become the Cecil B. De Mille (or the Albrecht Altdorfer) of the form. The world she's portraying in her panoramic canvases is deceptive: accessible but private, tricky and full of its own secret laws but at the same time refreshingly free of moroseness. Through Nov. 16. (Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937.)

PETER CAIN
Cain, who died in 1997 at the age of thirty-seven, hatched a dissonant style—call it photo-surrealism—that is growing in retrospective prestige. A crisp show celebrates his paintings of mutant cars: gleaming sedans reduced to a pod of their front and back ends, set on a single wheel; a head-on S.U.V. squeezed toward telephone-booth proportions; and coupes elongated like exactingly pulled taffy. Many of the images are set sideways or upside down, further straining their realist manner with assertions of the painter's impunity. Grating at first, Cain's sleek grotesqueries prove unforgettable. His transformation of our definitive machine—making it symbolize indivisible love and hate—takes willing viewers for a fast, rough ride. Through Nov. 23. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

PETER CAMPUS
Campus, an early pioneer of video art, switched cameras in the eighties to focus on photography and slide projections. For his first solo show in New York in four years, he returns to his roots with five lacklustre, contemplative videos from the past three years (hummingbirds hover, hedges are trimmed), accompanied by a brilliant experimental tape from 1973 and a series of photographic portraits from 1978. The luminous, high-contrast Polaroids have an intense, shadowy edge; they could be outtakes from a German Expressionist movie. Through Oct. 26. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.)

PAUL FEELEY
The unfairly obscure Paul Feeley, a legendary professor at Bennington and a gifted color-fieldish painter who died in 1967, has his day in a show of geometric enamel paintings and freestanding plywood sculptures. The motifs are tidy: jacks-like shapes, concave squares, and concentric bands of enamel, soaked into raw canvas or laid glossily on wood. Colors are soft and friendly: burnt orange, sky or baby blue, mustard, aqua. Feeley's originality was clouded for some by his unwitting anticipation of the supergraphic décor and "educational" kid design that became standard in the years after his death. Now that all of it is in the past, his art evokes an honest nostalgia that goes nicely with his rigorous formality and gentle lyricism. Through Nov. 23. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

WALTON FORD
Grand watercolors by the reigning naturalist painter, whose vision of nature is full of emancipated beasts and outré shades of instinctive violence. The paintings often depict first-contact moments and benighted interspecies misunderstandings, carefully balanced between the tragic and comic. Through Nov. 16. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 26th St. 563-4474.)


MELANIE EINZIG

Nina Bovasso carrying "Black and White Crowd," for her show at Clementine.

MARCIA HAFIF
The postminimal drawings in this beautiful show have sensual undertow that's surprising given their programmatic process. For a decade, Hafif drew row upon row of vertical pencil lines, making each mark a half-inch long and filling the page. The earliest work here, from 1972, was made on a heavy paper stock and evokes the warp and weft of weaving. One drawing has the stiff, orderly aspect of bristles, while another softens into fur. Taken together, they suggest pages written in a lost language dedicated to silence rather than sound. Through Nov. 2. (Marcus Ritter, 453 W. 17th St. 463-7375.)

Short List

ROBERT LONGO
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through Oct. 26.

SAM TAYLOR-WOOD
Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through Nov. 2.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

LIZA LOU
Lou, who has fabricated whole kitchens and back yards from acres of glass beads, here turns her needle, thread, glue gun, and welding torch to home and religion. A sparkling campfire and a snarling dog (his bared gums glitter iridescent pink) guard an abandoned trailer filled with beaded furniture, dishes, liquor bottles, boots, and guns—all the comforts of home with no comfort at all. A crown of thorns and two figures posed in perilous transcendence—a man stumbling backward as a white dove flies up from his mouth, and a child-size woman with water rising in her coffin—take Lou well beyond the gardens and checkered tablecloths of installations past. Through Nov. 30. (Deitch, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300.)

Short List

KAY ROSEN
The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.
Through Oct. 26.

JIM SHAW
Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway. 925-2035.
Through Oct. 26.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DAIDO MORIYAMA
In 1971, Moriyama, one of Japan's most beloved contemporary artists, spent a month in New York City with a friend and shot more than two thousand images during his stay. The extremely edited results are on view for the first time—tightly composed, grainy black-and-white shots of empty hotel hallways, Afroed pedestrians, and the street-corner mix of whizzing cars and lit-up theatre marquees. The series betrays the outsider's wonder at the city and his isolation as he learns his way around. Through Nov. 2. (Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067.)

"APERTURE AT 50: A CELEBRATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY"
When the first slim issue of *Aperture* surfaced, in 1952, could the founders, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Minor White, have expected a golden-anniversary issue or a series of celebratory exhibitions like these? From Staten Island to the Bronx, Williamsburg to the West Village, the magazine and its supporters will display images created by Robert Capa, William Eggleston, Danny Lyon, Sally Mann, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ray K. Metzker, Duane Michals, Sebastião Salgado, Cindy Sherman, Mary Ellen Mark, Edward Weston, and many others. Venues range from the International Center of Photography and the Aperture Foundation's own Burden Gallery to Barneys, Queens College, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, and the Cub Room. Never been to the Tishman-Speyer Building? It will feature two twelve-foot-long photographs by Doug and Mike Starn, each weighing a hundred and forty pounds. Most shows through Nov. 2. (Check the Aperture Foundation's Web site, www.aperture.org, for locations.)

"INVISIBLE BEINGS"
Georgiana Houghton performed séances and other acts of miscellaneous spiritual invocation in eighteen-seventies London, and, in collaboration with the studio of Fredrick Hudson, created sepia-toned, carte-de-visite-size photographic records of her supposed mediumship. These weird, disturbing, at times even terrifying images pose rigid Victorians on high-backed chairs only to surround them with Symbolist-style emanations that either glow like Glinda or gesture ominously like Banquo. Even skeptical viewers will find themselves entranced. Through Nov. 14. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—"Winogrand 1964." In 1964, Winogrand peeled out of midtown Manhattan and took to the open road, snapping twenty thousand shots in seventeen states over four months. This terrific show of nearly two hundred photographs, selected by the curator Trudy Wilner Stack, puts a fresh spin on summer-vacation pictures, as car windows and windshields frame many of the images. People at airports are frequently depicted, from a covey of nuns sipping coffee in San Francisco to a bikini-clad model being carried onto the tarmac in Lake Tahoe. Through Dec. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

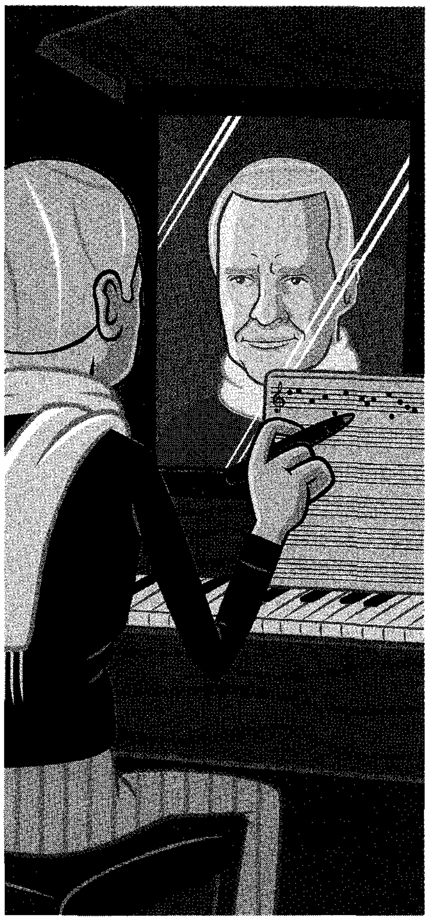
VIRGINIA BEAHAN AND LAURA MC PHEE
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Through Nov. 2.

JEFF WALL
Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.
Through Nov. 20.

THE 2002 ARMORY PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW
Javits Center, North Pavilion, 11th Ave. at
39th St. Oct. 25-28.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Oct. 23 at 2: Photographs by Berenice Abbott, from the collection of the Museum of the City of New York. ♦ Oct. 24 at 10:15 A.M.: Part I of a sale of photographs, including works by Adams, Strand, and Hoyningen-Huene. ♦ Oct. 24 at 2: Part II of the sale. The highlight is "Le Bateau Ivre," a unique Rayograph poster by Man Ray made in 1929 for the Drunken Boat, a Paris bar named after the Rimbaud poem. ♦ Oct. 24 at 2 and Oct. 25 at 10:15 A.M.: The first two sessions of a sale of French and Continental furniture and decorations and European art works, ceramics, tapestries, and carpets. ♦ Oct. 25 at 2: French furniture, clocks, and decorations from the collection of the Salgo Trust for Education. The third and final session of the sale of French and Continental furniture and other items begins immediately afterward. ♦ Oct. 26 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Two sessions of English furniture, ceramics, and decorations. The first concludes with an offering of more than a hundred items that belonged to Katharine Graham, including an extensive selection of formal and family photographs by Genthe, Steichen, Annie Leibovitz, and Arnold Newman and a set of fashion sketches from the studio of Halston, who was Graham's designer for fourteen years. ♦ Oct. 29 at 10:15 A.M.: Nineteenth-century European art. "Summer," a portrait of a lady by Tissot (estimated to bring approximately three million dollars), is a highlight of the sale. ♦ Oct. 29 at 2: Paintings, drawings, sculptures, and medallions belonging to the estates of David M. Daniels and Stevan Beck Baloga. Representations of the male nude (by such artists as Lord Leighton and Degas) figure prominently in the sale, which also includes a suite of nine drawings of men and women by Adolph Menzel. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)



Ned Rorem celebrates his seventy-ninth birthday with a concert at the Kosciuszko Foundation on October 23.

MICHAEL WELDON

CHRISTIE'S
Oct. 23 at 10 A.M.: An offering of neoclassical English furniture, including a George III green marble statuary chimneypiece designed by Robert Adam. ♦ Oct. 24 at 10 A.M. and 2: Silver, Russian art works, and objects of virtu. ♦ Oct. 29 at 10 A.M. and 2: Nineteenth-century furniture, along with a selection of sculpture, art works, and ceramics. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

PHILLIPS
Oct. 25 at 7:30: Part I of a sale of photographs, including major works by Avedon (a unique early version of "The Family," a 1976 suite of photographs of prominent political figures made for *Rolling Stone*) and Man Ray. ♦ Oct. 26 at 10:30 A.M.: Part II of the sale, including works by such artists as Tina Barney, Eliot Porter, and the team of McDermott and McGough. (3 W. 57th St. 940-1200.)

DOYLE
Oct. 23 at 10 A.M.: English and Continental furniture, along with a selection of paintings, drawings, silver, rugs, and decorations. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
Oct. 24 at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30: Books from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among the highlights of the sale are an unrestored first-edition copy of "Ulysses," on handmade paper, from Shakespeare and Company, and a thirteen-volume first edition of Proust's "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu" (including two volumes inscribed by the author). (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

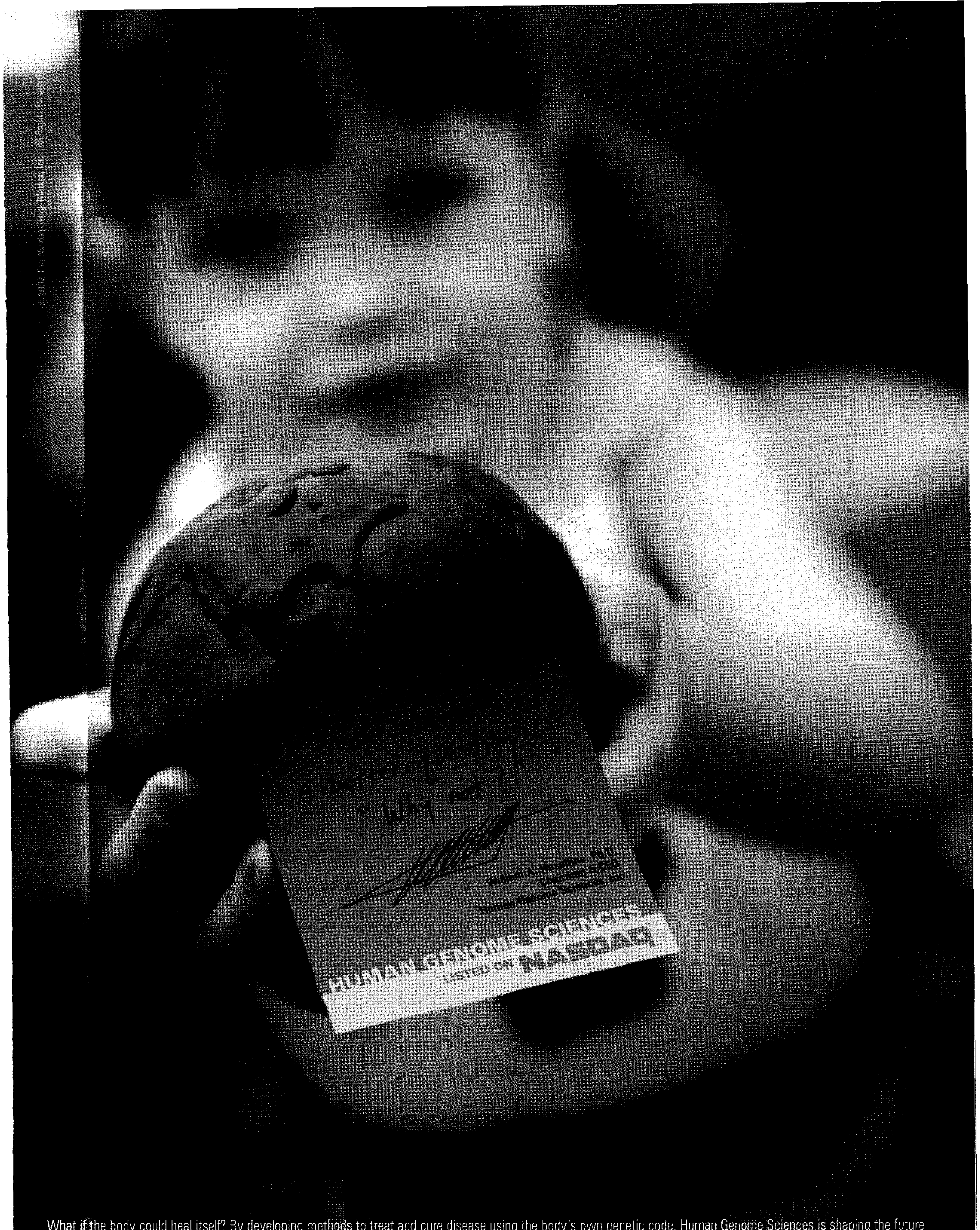
METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Turandot," with Audrey Stottler (a début), Hei-Kyung Hong, Vladimir Galouzine, and Hao Jiang Tian; Carlo Rizzi conducts. (Oct. 23 and Oct. 26 at 8.) ♦ For the final performance of Giordano's **"Andrea Chénier,"** the company brings in a mostly new cast (including Aprile Millo, Frederick Burchinal, Katherine Ciesinski, and Jill Grove) to stand with Plácido Domingo, who is surely making one of his last forays into the heroic Italian repertory. Paul Nadler conducts. (Oct. 24 at 8.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Wendy Nielsen, Victoria Livengood (in the title role), Richard Leech, and Ludovic Tézier; Yves Abel. (Oct. 25 at 8.) ♦ The Met continues its première performances of Bellini's **"Il Pirata,"** the opera that made his name. Its rare stagings tend to be occasions for virtuoso singing, and these performances will be no exception, with Marcello Giordani and Renée Fleming filling the shoes of such legends as Rubini and Schröder-Devrient; Bruno Campanella. (Oct. 26 at 1:30 and Oct. 29 at 8.) ♦ **"Aida"** returns to the repertory, with a cast that includes Michele Crider, Irina Mishura, Richard Margison, Alexandru Agache, and Paata Burchuladze; Marco Armiliato. (Oct. 28 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Renata Scotto's production of **"La Traviata,"** with Pamela Armstrong, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Jason Howard; Steuart Bedford conducts. (Oct. 24 at 7:30 and Oct. 26 at 8.) ♦ **"The Marriage of Figaro,"** with Ying Huang, Amy Burton, Kirstin Chávez, Nathan Berg, and Christopher Schaldenbrand; Steven Mosteller. (Oct. 25 at 8.) ♦ Gary Thor Wedow conducts a new principal cast that includes Georgia Jarman, Nicolle Foland, Leah Summers, George Cordes, and Michael Chioldi. (Oct. 29 at 7:30.) ♦ The first performance this season of **"The Barber of Seville,"** with Angela Turner Wilson, Kathryn Cowdrick, Leigh Melrose, and Bruce Sledge; David Agler. (Oct. 26 at 1:30.) ♦ A new production, directed by Mark Lamos, of Chabrier's **"L'Étoile,"** an endearing comic opera (and a favorite of Debussy's) set in a cream-puff kingdom of olden times. With Lauren Skuce, Jennifer Rivera, Robert Orth, Don Frazure, and Kevin Burdette; George Manahan. (Oct. 27 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

WEBER'S "DIE DREI PINTOS"
With recent performances of "Euryanthe" and "Oberon" winning raves, Weber, like Prokofiev, might be enjoying something of a revival. The Bard Mahler Festival at Lincoln Center presents an exceedingly rare performance of his last, unfinished opera, a Spanish comedy arranged and completed by Mahler in 1888. Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in a concert version, featuring the singers Janice Chandler and Andrew Schroeder. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 26 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

SACRED SOUNDS
While the Philharmonic is out on tour, a classical listener might do well to take in some of the grander concerts at the city's churches—and a range of them are offered this week, both traditional and offbeat. Oct. 25 at 8: "Sacred Music in a Sacred Space," the longtime concert series at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, begins the season with Kent Tritle conducting the church's choir and orchestra in works by Mozart (the Mass in C Minor, K. 427), Bach (the Cantata No. 78, "Jesu, der du meine Seele"), and Scarlatti. (980 Park



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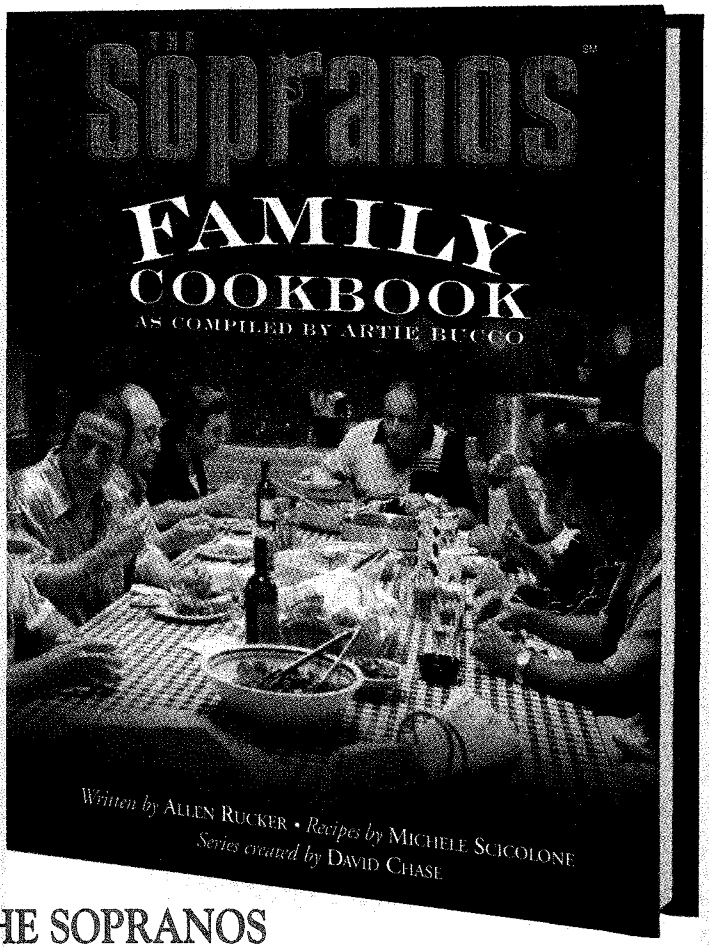
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CLASSICAL NOTES

MALE CALL

If asked to conjure up a male singing group, most people would think of an Ivy League collective toasting the tables down at Mory's, or a doo-wop foursome pining for their girlfriends on a street corner in South Philly. The San Francisco-based Chanticleer, which celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this season, draws from neither tradition, though its range of repertory is so wide that it could probably imitate either genre with expertise. The story of Chanticleer is as improbable as it is impressive. By transforming the traditional European choir of men and boys into a virtuoso all-adult ensemble—the twelve members sing all the parts from bass up to soprano—they have become the longest-running independent full-time classical vocal ensemble in the country, and successful recording artists.

The ensemble comes to the Metropolitan Museum this week for a concert of selections from their latest album, **"Our American Journey"** (Teldec). The recording illustrates the group's recent evolution: the tenor and early-music scholar Louis Botto, who founded Chanticleer in 1978 and served as its conductor, died in 1997 (one of his final recordings, **"Sing We Christmas,"** is one of those rare holiday albums good enough to be listened to all year round) and was replaced by one of the group's altos, Joseph Jennings. Jennings has lightened the group's sound and given its repertory more of a populist spin. "Journey" runs the gamut, from sacred music of the Mexican Baroque to Gershwin and Ann Ronell (a teasing rendition of "Willow Weep for Me"), by way of spirituals and contemporary classical works. The opening number, the hymn "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," is an old, strangely twisting melody from Appalachia sung in unison—the American equivalent of Gregorian chant.

Chanticleer's pastel timbre, dead-on intonation, and precise articulation are persuasive throughout, except in the anthems from the Sacred Harp tradition, with the group at times adopting twangy Southern accents that bring the performances close to parody. Fortunately, other recent albums, such as their première recording of John Tavener's haunting "Lamentations and Praises," attest to the group's continuing devotion to the most serious repertoire.

—*Russell Platt*

Ave., at 84th St. 288-2520.) ♦ Oct. 29 at 7:30: The St. Thomas Choir teams up with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and a host of young choristers from local Episcopal churches, to present an all-Britten program, including "Rejoice in the Lamb," the Festival Te Deum, and the rarely performed oratorio "Saint Nicolas." Gerre Hancock conducts. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 664-9360.) ♦ Oct. 29 at 7:30: Those who tootled on a recorder in an elementary-school music program may be surprised to learn that the instrument, which thrived during the Baroque and Renaissance periods, has made a strong comeback in recent years. The Dutch recorder orchestra Praetorius, twenty-five strong, performs a concert at the Church of the Holy Apostles entitled "The Four Elements," which features works by Handel and a selection of contemporary composers. (296 Ninth Ave., at 28th St. 807-6799.)

CHANTICLEER: "OUR AMERICAN JOURNEY"
The renowned chorus sings music from its latest album (see Classical Notes). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Oct. 25 at 8.)

ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL
The magnificent orchestra, still searching for a new music director after the abrupt departure of Charles Dutoit, comes to New York for two concerts led by guest conductors who are seigneurs of French style. Oct. 26 at 8: Michel Plasson conducts Berlioz's "La Damnation de Faust," the first of many events this

season that will celebrate the bicentenary of the composer's birth. The vocal soloists include the mezzo-soprano Ruxandra Donose and the bass-baritone John Relyea, with the assistance of the O.S.M. Chorus and the youngsters of Les Petits Chanteurs de Laval. ♦ Oct. 27 at 3: The orchestra and chorus (with the tenor Jon Garrison), led by Emmanuel Villaume, performs two works celebrating the primal forms of song and dance, Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé" (in the complete ballet score) and Szymanowski's sumptuous Third Symphony, "Song of the Night." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

KREMERATA BALTICA
Many artists with an eccentric streak seek to augment their fame by periodically hiding themselves away (Horowitz and Michelangeli were two prominent examples), but Gidon Kremer, the violin world's leading nonconformist, takes the opposite tack by sharing his enthusiasms with the world. He is both soloist and conductor for two concerts with his chamber orchestra, a group of outstanding young Baltic musicians whose playing he has groomed according to his own intense and visionary style. Oct. 28 at 7:30: "Early Works," a concert of pieces from the youthful careers of Britten, Mendelssohn (the Violin Concerto in D Minor, written long before the renowned Concerto in E Minor), the violist Vladimir Mendelssohn (no relation, apparently), and George Enescu (the Octet in C Major, which the group has recently recorded). ♦ Oct. 29 at 7:30: "In Memoriam," an evening of swan-song pieces by Mahler and Schubert (an arrangement for string orchestra of the Quartet in G Major), along with Hartmann's "Concerto Funèbre." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

RECITALS

GIL SHAHAM, TRULS MØRK, AND YEFIM BRONFMAN
In a Carnegie Hall concert, the all-star pickup trio of violin, cello, and piano performs warhorses by Schubert (the Trio in B-Flat Major) and Tchaikovsky. (247-7800. Oct. 23 at 7:30.)

MILLER THEATRE: MUSIC BY LEE HYLA
A fiftieth-birthday retrospective showcasing several works by one of downtown's hardiest composers, whose music is a pugnacious but smartly crafted confect of punk, postwar expressionism, and avant-garde jazz. The performers include the baritone Robert Osborne and the ensemble Counter)Induction. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Oct. 23 at 8.)

LYRIC CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY: "RORATHON"
Once upon a time, Ned Rorem was a dangerous man: his diaries shocked the cognoscenti with the details of his expansive gay life, and his unabashedly melodic music was a staunch holdout in a postwar music community pursuing grayness and complexity at all costs. He endures, though, as an emblem of a time when serious culture seemed to weigh a little more than it does today. Still a very active composer and pianist, he celebrates his seventy-ninth birthday with a concert including the New York première of "Aftermath," a song cycle that meditates on the events of September 11th; Judy Collins will join him in one of his other songs. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 875-4230. Oct. 23 at 8.)

THE KITCHEN: "TIME OF COMMUNION"
A collaborative "interaction" between the composer Somei Satoh, the baritone Thomas Buckner, and the pianist Aki Takahashi, with dances by Kei Takei and sculptures by Alain Kirili. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Oct. 23-26 at 8.)

JOSÉ VAN DAM
The eminent bass-baritone presents two concerts with the pianist Maciej Pikulski. Oct. 24 at 8: Schubert's "Winterreise." ♦ Oct. 27 at 5: Songs by Schumann, including "Dichterliebe." (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500.)

ROCK HOTEL PIANOFEST
Chris Williamson, whose Rock Hotel firm has promoted artists ranging from John Tavener to Metallica, shakes up the piano-recital format with a series of fall concerts which presents distinguished players in an informal atmosphere. Oct. 25 at 8: Earl Wild, the octogenarian avatar of Romantic style, starts off the series with a recital of Beethoven, Chopin (the Ballade No. 3), Liszt, and others. The young Russian pianist Natasha Paremski, in rock-concert fashion, opens for him with music by Stravinsky and Brahms. ♦ Oct. 26 at 8: Boris Berezovsky plays a daring program of Crumb ("Makrokosmos I") and Liszt (the "Transcendental Études"). (Society Hall, Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. 307-4100.)

THEO BLECKMANN AND DENMAN MARONEY
The cabaret singer, a local cult favorite, and the pianist perform songs and lieder written in the shadow of war by Eisler, Weill, and Hollaender, with a bit of Kraftwerk tossed in. The venue, the Café Sabarsky, located at the regal Neue Galerie, the Museum for German and Austrian Art, seems ideal. (Fifth Ave. at 86th St. 994-9493. Oct. 25 at 9.)

HYREUS DUO: "FOR SUCH A DREAM"
A new soprano-and-piano team performs works by Hagen, Poulenc, Weill, and others. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Oct. 26 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

STEFAN WOLPE CENTENNIAL
In the highlight of the centennial's final weekend of events, the pianist Peter Serkin, the violinist Daniel Phillips, and the Brentano Quartet perform the Sonata for Violin and Piano, the String Quartet, and other works. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Oct. 26 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

DEPARTMENT OF RETURNED ITEMS
Found magazine, a strangely enticing Ann Arbor, Michigan-based publication devoted to the errant documents (lost love notes, crumbled shopping lists, misplaced résumés) that are the quotidian

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minutiae of our individual lives, celebrates the publication of its second issue with a party and a presentation of newly recovered documents, including a short play and an anonymous home video of a drunken camping trip. "It'll only confirm for New Yorkers all the things they've always believed about people who live anywhere else in the country," says a friend of the magazine's editor, the twenty-seven-year-old writer and documentary filmmaker Davy Rothbart. Scavengers, seekers, and fans should come prepared: lucky attendees will have the opportunity to present their own finds in front of the crowd. (Gale Gates et al., 37 Main St., Dumbo. 718-522-4596. Oct. 26 at 9.)

READINGS

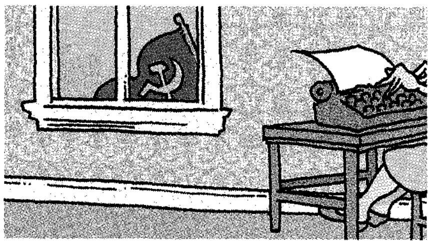
Oct. 23 at 8: The performance poet Pamela Sneed reads stories about her teeth and selections from her forthcoming book, "20 Minutes Was Forever." (The Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. 614-0505.) ♦ Oct. 26 at 6: The artist Linda St. John reads from her memoir, "Even Dogs Go Home to Die." (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St. 219-3055.) ♦ Oct. 27 at 2: Richard Goodman and Amy Stewart offer passages from their books about gardening: "French Dirt," which concerns Goodman's plot in the Gallic countryside, and "From the Ground Up," an account of Stewart's efforts in Santa Cruz. (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200.) ♦ Oct. 28 at 7:30: The poets Dan Brown and Ginny MacKensie read from their work. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS

Oct. 24 at 7: The New York Institute for the Humanities presents the art historian Michael Fried, who will reprise a portion of his six-part lecture on Caravaggio, which he gave at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., this past spring. (Hemmerdinger Hall, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. For more information, call 998-2100.) ♦ Oct. 28 at 7: The journalist and novelist Robert MacNeil talks with the short-story writer Alice Munro. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Poet's Mind



TONY MILLIONAIRE

Wislawa Szymborska, the Polish poet who won the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature, has lived in Kraków since 1931. In the late sixties, she began to write about books that had caught her eye, books like "The Enigmatic Lemming," "Accidents in the Home," and "The Historical Development of Clothing." These short pieces, collected in **NONREQUIRED READING** (Harcourt), translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh, skitter over Szymborskan topics like bodybuilding, archeology, and the lottery of existence while referring, usually obliquely, to oppression and deprivation. Writing about a book called "Wallpapering Your Home," she observes, "Hobbies in their Polish variant are pastimes taken up not voluntarily, but by necessity," and then chronicles the setbacks and delays that thwart do-it-yourself projects under totalitarian regimes. Szymborska's deadpan sketches are whimsical and menacing; like her poems, they remind us that we spend our lives "a hairsbreadth from / an unfortunate coincidence."

If political conditions in Eastern Europe during the late sixties were bad for home improvement, they were good for literature. A scholarly study by Bozena Shallcross, a professor of Slavic languages and literatures at the University of Chicago, examines the effect of Communist restrictions on travel on three other poets: Adam Zagajewski, Zbigniew Herbert, and Joseph Brodsky. **THROUGH THE POET'S EYE** (Northwestern) looks at the prose produced by the poets' epiphanic encounters with Western art. In front of Vermeer's "Girl Interrupted at Her Music," which hangs at the Frick, Zagajewski pulls up short. "All of a sudden," he writes, "I felt how reality stopped for an instant and froze in harmonious motionlessness."

—*Dana Goodyear*

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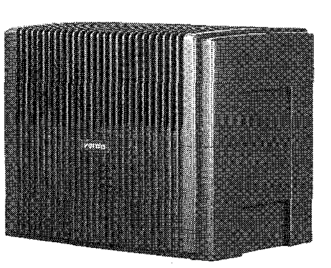

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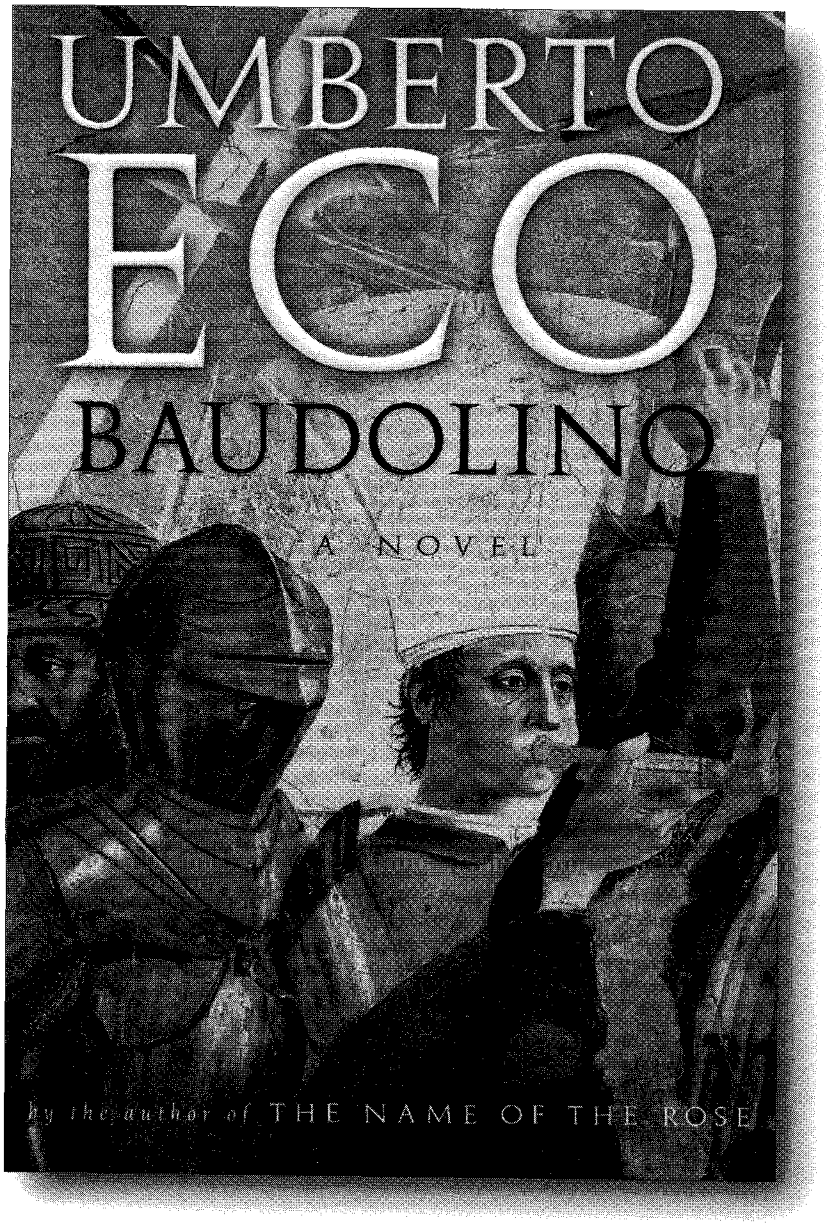

Baudolino

by Umberto Eco

A simple Italian peasant with an amazing propensity for language and a penchant for mendacity, Baudolino befriends an Emperor, attends university in Paris, and embarks on an odyssey in search of Prester John, the legendary priest-king said to rule over a vast and phantasmagorical land in the East. This wonderfully imaginative novel set in 12th and 13th century Europe transports readers on an incredible narrative journey while also providing plenty of signature Eco digressions offering fascinating reflections on both past and present. (Harcourt)

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MOVIES OPENING

ALL OR NOTHING
A drama written and directed by Mike Leigh, which takes place over a long weekend and looks at the life of a London cabbie (Timothy Spall) and his common-law wife (Lesley Manville). Opening Oct. 25. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALL THE QUEEN'S MEN
Eddie Izzard and Matt LeBlanc play secret agents who dress in drag to complete a mission, in a comedy set during the Second World War. Opening Oct. 25.

THE BANK
The Australian writer-director Robert Connolly's début feature is a thriller with Anthony LaPaglia as a banker who discovers a formula that predicts the rise and fall of the stock market. Opening Oct. 25. (Quad Cinema.)

DERRIDA
A documentary about the French philosopher, directed by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman. Opening Oct. 23. (Film Forum.)

FOOD OF LOVE
Ventura Pons directed this drama about the relationship between a celebrated concert pianist (Paul Rhys) and his attractive protégé (Kevin Bishop). Opening Oct. 25.

FRIDA
Salma Hayek plays the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo in a bio-pic directed by Julie Taymor ("Titus"). With Alfred Molina as Diego Rivera, Edward Norton as Nelson Rockefeller, and Geoffrey Rush as Leon Trotsky. Opening Oct. 25.

GHOST SHIP
A horror film in which a salvage crew discovers an abandoned cargo vessel in a remote area of the Bering Sea. Opening Oct. 25.

JACKASS: THE MOVIE
The MTV show that documents Johnny Knoxville and friends performing stupid stunts comes to the big screen. Opening Oct. 25.

PAID IN FULL
A drama set in the nineteen-eighties about a young man (Wood Harris) who gets drawn into the Harlem drug trade. With Mekhi Phifer and Kevin Carroll. Opening Oct. 25.

ROGER DODGER
Campbell Scott plays a womanizing advertising executive who takes his teen-age cousin on a tour of Manhattan night life, in a drama written and directed by Dylan Kidd. Opening Oct. 25.

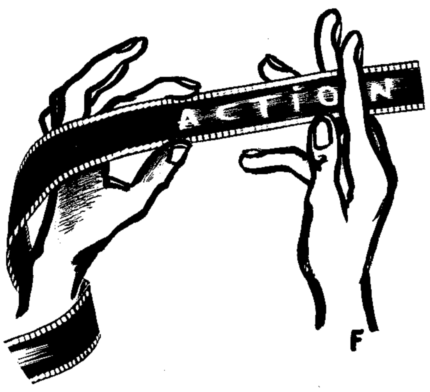
THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE
Jonathan Demme directed this remake of the 1963 romantic thriller "Charade." Set in Paris, the movie stars Thandie Newton, Mark Wahlberg, and Tim Robbins. Opening Oct. 25.

FILM NOTES

AUTO FOCUS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

BELOW
It would be hard to imagine a more generic title for this underwater thriller, except, perhaps, "Submarine." That's unfortunate, because "Below" is a well-crafted sub movie complete with a creaky Second World War setting. The director, David Twohy, who's responsible for two other fine nail-biters ("Pitch Black" and "The Arrival"), gets the spooky, claustrophobic atmosphere kick-started with a "Twilight Zone" plot: the American crew rescues three survivors from a sunken British hospital ship, and the madness begins. The script is slick and a bit predictable, but the dialogue is plentiful and sharp (Darren Aronofsky had a hand in it). Twohy is best with moments of old-fashioned tension: the depth charge bouncing along the ship's hull, the mysterious whisper in the hall.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and 34th Street Theatre.)

BLOODY SUNDAY
A stunning re-creation of events that took place in 1972 in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, when British paratroopers, trying to restore order after a particularly unruly period, opened fire on a peaceful demonstration, and fourteen Irish Catholic civil-rights protesters died. The British writer-director Paul Greengrass uses a handheld camera that tilts, skitters, and pitches about madly as it makes its way among the seething Irish and the frightened British soldiers. The actors are caught on the run, saying their lines quickly and harshly as they run in and out of rooms or move through the crowds, which come together, break, and re-form like foam on a beach. With James Nesbitt as the Irish member of Parliament who led the march and who believed in Martin Luther King, Jr., and a strategy of nonviolence. The movie is his tragedy—the tragedy of innocence.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/7/02.) (Astor Plaza, East 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.)



BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

8 WOMEN
François Ozon's new picture is a tonic of sorts, a hot-hued, postmodern murder-mystery musical hen party. The setting is virginal and unashamedly fake—a snowbound house interrupted by the arrival of a horde of famous French actresses. The wisest way to list them without giving offense is alphabetically: Fanny Ardant, Emmanuelle Béart, Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Ledoyen, Firmine Richard, and Ludivine Sagnier. For sheer fetishistic whoopee, there is very little to rival the sight of Deneuve and Ardant getting into a catfight, all hisses and claws, and then sinking to the floor to stroke each other's whiskers. Ozon plainly worships the idea of the grande dame, and the movie allows him to both honor and deride his own devotion. There's lots of dancing, a striptease, and a surfeit of arch self-consciousness. Yet something of substance does creep through this concoction. In the competitive jostling of the women, we sense the eternal face-off of beauty against the beast of time. Nobody is more touching in this regard than Darrieux, her soft wrinkles unable to erode the exquisite heroines she once incarnated for Max Ophuls. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (9/16/02) (Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

IGBY GOES DOWN
A drama that treads deep into the heart of Salinger country: Kieran Culkin is Igby, late of military school, now sulking in Manhattan and running amok with his mother's credit card. Burr Steers, in his début as a writer-director, seems to remember only Holden Caulfield's alienation, and none of the self-scrutiny—the sense that rebellion is a pose like any other—which makes that novel more than just a kiss-off. The movie has a cold and sour take on the rich and feckless, and the decision to open the film with Igby and his brother (Ryan Phillippe) euthanizing their mother (Susan Sarandon) doesn't exactly leave a lot of room to maneuver. There are a few affecting scenes with Igby's mentally unstable father (Bill Pullman), but none of the nuanced emotional progression that the story needs to have genuine impact. With Claire Danes as a Bennington poetess and Amanda Peet as a SoHo mistress.—*Michael Agger* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING
This small, inexpensively made independent movie has become a commercial phenomenon, drawing out homebound older moviegoers who had largely been resigned to watching sitcoms. The trouble is, the movie is not all that different from a sitcom. Nia Vardalos, who developed the material from her own experience, is Toula, a thirty-year-old unmarried "seating hostess" at a restaurant run by her Greek-American family in Chicago. The family considers Toula a disgrace and pursues her like the Furies, hounding her with lousy advice and overloaded plates of lamb and baklava. When a blandly handsome Wasp named Ian (John Corbett) enters the scene and begins dating Toula, the family goes haywire. The director, Joel Zwick, has a gentle touch: some of the behavior onscreen may be crass, but the movie itself isn't crassly made. The conventionality of it all is depressing, though. With Michael Constantine as the self-pitying, tyrannical head of the family, Lainie Kazan as Toula's mother, and the expert needle-nosed farceur Andrea Martin as one of the lamb-bearing aunts.—*D.D.* (9/23/02) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

PULL MY DAISY
This short film from 1959 is a neat Beat picker-upper set in the slaphappy bohemian pad of a railroad conductor whose pals include Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and Gregory Corso—all of whom carry on, naturally enough, like poets in their youth. Jack Kerouac based the script on the third act of his play "The Beat Generation," which in turn was based on the real-life visit of a progressive clergyman to Neal Cassady's house. But there's no story to speak of, and, in fact, there's no dialogue: the hilarity emerges from the way Kerouac's non-stop voice-over narration gives breezy comic ripples to seemingly spontaneous shenanigans. "Their secret, naked doodlings do show secret, scatological thought," he says in a verbal deadpan. "That's why everybody wants to see it." Under the co-direction of Alfred Leslie and the photographer Robert Frank—who wields his camera with a tipsy intimacy—the mostly amateur cast conjures an infectious, arrested-adolescent joie de vivre. The artist Larry Rivers plays the conductor, and Delphine Seyrig is his long-suffering wife; the painter Alice Neel plays the clergyman's mother.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 26.)

PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE
Paul Thomas Anderson's whimsical romantic comedy is a bit like an amusement-park ride that builds tremendous forward momentum and then suddenly juts to the side. Even those of us who enjoy perversity in movies may be put off by its skittering, against-the-beat rhythms. Adam Sandler plays Barry Egan, a frightened fellow in a bright-blue suit, a nerd who sells merchandise out of a San Fernando Valley warehouse and stammers his way through the simplest encounters. At dawn, a harmonium is dropped from a truck outside the warehouse; a bit later, a lovely woman (Emily Watson) inexplicably falls in love with Barry as the music track offers drumbeats in arbitrary counterpoint to the imagery—in fact, everything that happens is arbitrary, and the characters are mysterious without becoming interesting. At times, Barry explodes with rage, slamming his fists into the walls. Anderson wants to say something quirky and powerful about love and the miraculousness of ordinary lives, but his world neither intersects with ours at any point nor hangs together as an independent magical creation. There are touches out of Harold Lloyd's and Jacques Tati's comedies and old Hollywood musicals, but just touches.—*D.D.* (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

QUAI DES ORFÈVRES
A stunningly well-made entertainment, this 1947 detective film by Henri-Georges Clouzot features the master actor Louis Jouvet in the role of a police inspector. His world is contrasted with that of the music hall, represented by the full-blown, hypersexual Suzy Delair. When this voluptuous slut sings "Avec Son Tra-la-la," she may make you wonder if

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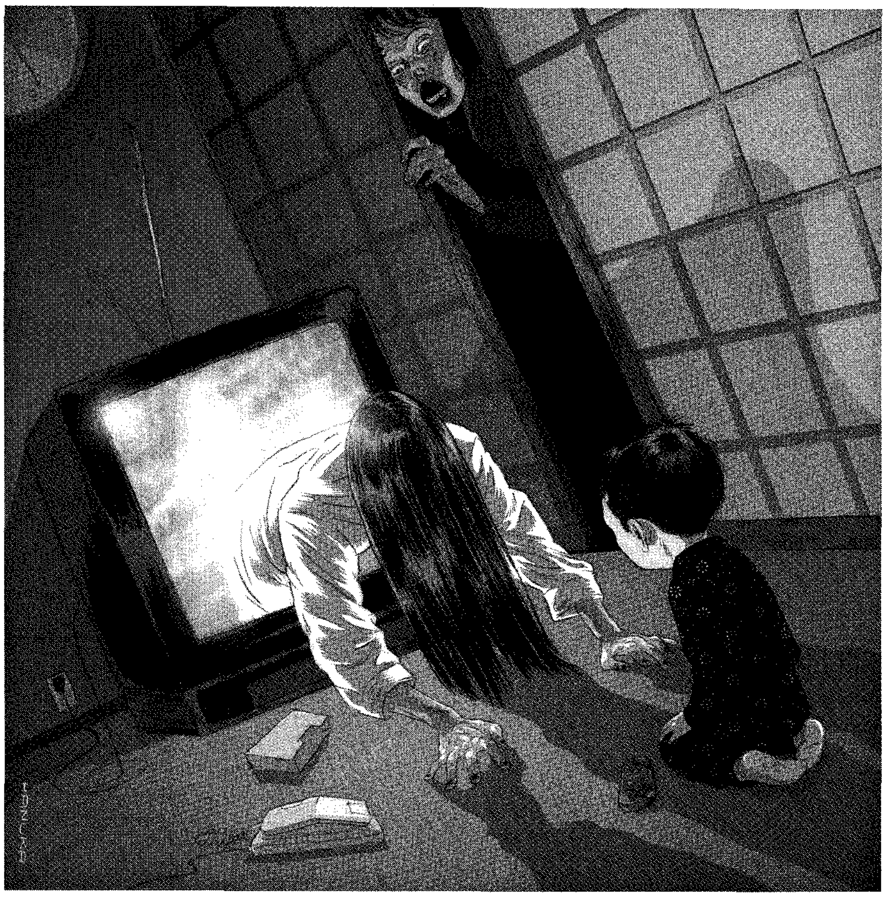
the higher things in life are worth the trouble. With Bernard Blier as Delair's worshipful-masochist husband, Charles Dullin in the role of a lecherous hunchback, and, as a lesbian photographer, Simone Renant, at the time said to be the most beautiful actress in Paris. The film took the top prize at Venice, but in this country it never got the audience it deserved. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; starting Oct. 25.)

RED DRAGON

A fourth helping of Hannibal Lecter, the third featuring Anthony Hopkins, and, with any luck, the last for a while. When a character becomes a franchise, there is only so much repetition that he—or she—can take before sliding into parody, and there is something distasteful in the thought that we are being urged to treat a homicidal maniac as a lovable rogue. The film presents a more youthful Lecter (although Hopkins cannot camouflage his years) who arrives in jail after spearing a detective called Will Graham (Edward Norton). From his cell, Lecter helps Graham to track the savage Tooth Fairy, whose real name is Dolarhyde (Ralph Fiennes), and whose identity Graham is strangely slow to unveil. In comparison with "The Silence of the Lambs," the new movie lacks mystery and dread, but the screenwriter, Ted Tally—who also scripted "Lambs" but wisely passed on "Hannibal"—lends it shape and thrust. Directed by Brett Ratner, somewhat anonymously. With Emily Watson as a startling and sexy blind woman, and Philip Seymour Hoffman as a journalist whom you can chew.—*A.L.* (10/14 & 21/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



At Walter Reade Theatre, the 1998 Japanese horror movie "Ring."

TOMER HANUKA

SECRETARY

A comic porno-fantasy shot by the director Steven Shainberg in a slow, dreamy, neo-De Palma style with a candy-colored palette. Maggie Gyllenhaal is a masochistic girl who finds happiness working for a creepy lawyer (James Spader) who regularly whacks her on the fanny. Gyllenhaal has a Kewpie-doll silliness that almost makes the naughty parts of the movie fun, but Shainberg takes forever to get the story going and lacks the stylistic panache to pull off his pain-is-liberation premise. The movie is a piece of brazen anti-feminism that says, "If pain is your thing, you go, girl!"—*D.D.* (9/23/02) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and 64th and 2nd.)

SPIRITED AWAY

In his native Japan, the animator-director Hayao Miyazaki is considered a national treasure, and this movie, which he came out of retirement to complete, recently surpassed "Titanic" as that country's highest-grossing picture. It's an amazing work, filled with a visual intelligence that's meticulously composed and obscenely clever. Miyazaki's playful aesthetic is like a Japanese word that can't be adequately translated, best approximated as part Spielberg, part Dr. Seuss. "Mature" American audiences may be put off at first by a film that is essentially a cartoon about a fearful ten-year-old girl. But as the hero, Chihiro, sees her parents turned into swine and flees into an alternate world filled with the creatures of Japanese mythology and of Miyazaki's own invention, any distracting sense of childishness falls away. Left to savor are virtuoso touches, like a flock of birds that become useless paper, a train that glides along the surface of a lake, and one of the great villains of all time, Yubaba, who looks like a bobble-headed grandmother on speed.—*M.A.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SWEET HOME ALABAMA

Among the many talents of Reese Witherspoon is the ability to hang around in movies that are unworthy of her, and thus to shine all the brighter. After "Legally Blonde," she's chosen to play yet another fish out of water: Melanie, a fashion designer with a guy problem and a background problem. Andrew (Patrick Dempsey) wants to make her his bride, but standing in her way is Andrew's ice-queen mother (Candice Bergen), who's also the mayor of New York, and the unpleasant fact that she's already married to Jake (Josh Lucas), the love of her former life in Alabama, who is now covered in facial hair and engine oil. Reese may want to forget this trifle by Christmas, yet the movie allows her to sharpen her grasp of a steely American type: the girl next door who will kill to get out of town.—*A.L.* (9/30/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SWEPT AWAY

Guy Ritchie casts his wife, Madonna, and the hunky Italian actor Adriano Giannini adrift in this pointless remake of Lina Wertmüller's 1974 polemic (which starred Adriano's father, Giancarlo). The story, about a spoiled rich woman who gets stranded on a desert island with a socialist deckhand, let Wertmüller make some blunt observations about money and class. Ritchie wisely rejects any politicizing, but it's the only smart move he makes. As the characters taunt and tease each other in a battle of the sexes, the movie becomes histrionic and mind-numbingly juvenile.—*B.D.* (First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE TRANSPORTER

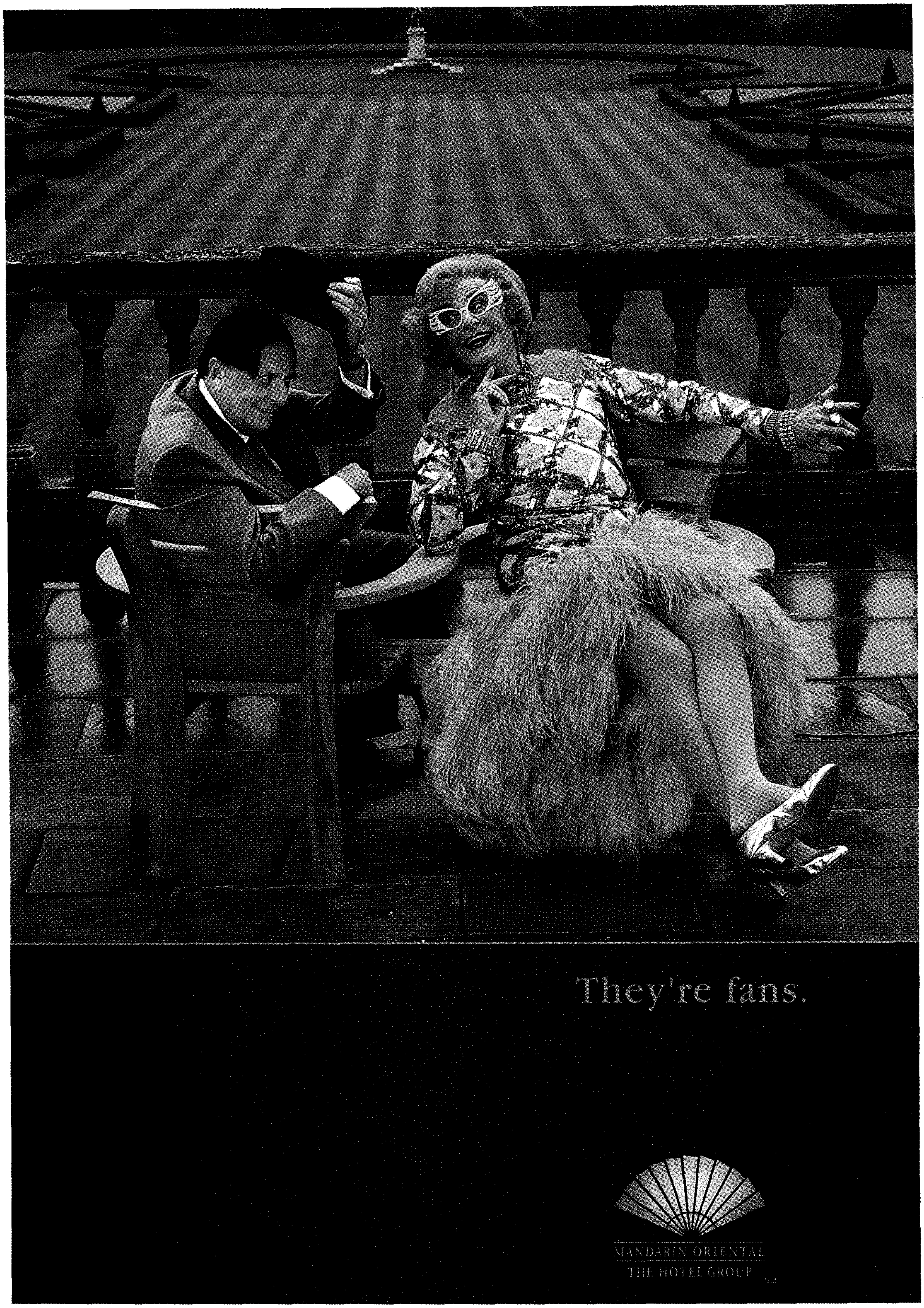
Jason Statham, best remembered from "Snatch," stars in this successfully generic action film directed, with bang-bang enthusiasm, by the Hong Kong action master Corey Yuen. He plays a chauffeur moonlighting as a courier of smuggled packages (bombs and kidnap victims) who quickly runs afoul of a Chinese crime lord. The extended action scenes fit together like pieces of a puzzle and display a silly, sly humor. The movie is noteworthy for Statham's delicious athletic performance; he moves beautifully, tossing off his lines like firecrackers.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER

A brisk, half-convincing trial in absentia of the former Secretary of State. The movie asks: if Milosevic and Pinochet have been hauled before courts, shouldn't Kissinger also be held legally responsible for what his Cold War policies led to in Cambodia, in Chile, and in East Timor? The movie, funded by the BBC, is based on Christopher Hitchens's 2001 book, and Hitchens, who has a fondness for moral melodrama, figures prominently in the movie, backed up by the sombre British journalist William Shawcross, the investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, and a variety of jurists and former Kissinger aides. The producer-director team of Eugene Jarecki and Alex Gibney employ the usual mosaic style of film journalism, in which short interview and newsreel fragments are joined together with voice-over narration (spoken by Brian Cox). The method of pointed assemblage is useful for conveying a great deal of information quickly, but it's inadequate for a subject of this gravity, which requires the patience and thoughtfulness of a Marcel Ophuls.—*D.D.* (10/7/02) (Film Forum.)

WHITE OLEANDER

Does anyone know what happened to the Michelle Pfeiffer who made "The Fabulous Baker Boys" and "Married to the Mob"? She seems to have disappeared, taking with her a sly sense of fun, leaving the new-model Pfeiffer to concentrate on earnest empowerment studies like "Dangerous Minds," and now this. Peter Kosminsky's film, adapted from the novel by Janet Fitch, stars Pfeiffer as a Los Angeles artist who kills a man and goes to prison, a place she enjoys for its clarity of purpose, and from where she urges her teen-age daughter Astrid (Alison Lohman) to be herself at all costs. In practice, this involves making life hell for any foster parent who has the guts, or the kindness, to take Astrid on. The film is luminous to look at and hard to listen to, as great chunks of whole-meal fiction are read out in voice-over. There are contributions from Robin Wright Penn and Renée Zellweger, but the movie belongs to Lohman, who must be praying that it will lead to roles in which she will be allowed to smile.—*A.L.* (10/14 & 21/02) (Battery Park 16, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)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THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW
One of the best of Fritz Lang's American movies—a 1944 thriller with the logic and plausibility of a nightmare. Lang's technique is so sure and so seductive that the viewer completely identifies with the safe, serene protagonist (Edward G. Robinson), an associate professor of psychology at a New York City college, and shares his shock and fear when he's caught in a trap. The professor is interested in the relation of motive to homicide—an interest that's purely a matter of intellectual curiosity. Then, when his wife and child are out of town, he visits a woman's apartment; her lover comes in and unexpectedly attacks him, and he kills the intruder with a pair of scissors. Joan Bennett is the woman in the case, Dan Duryea is a blackmailer, and Raymond Massey is an assistant district attorney.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Oct. 28-29.)

ALSO PLAYING

COMEDIAN
Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.
HEAVEN
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
KNOCKAROUND GUYS
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
NAQOYQATSI
Angelika Film Center.
REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
THE RING
Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Ziegfeld.
THE RULES OF ATTRACTION
Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.
SAFE CONDUCT
Sutton 1 and 2.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

Johnny Knoxville in "Jackass: The Movie," opening October 25.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Oct. 27: "Hollywood Independents: A History of United Artists." Oct. 26 at 1: "Persona" (1966, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Oct. 26 at 4:30: "Interiors" (1978, Woody Allen). ♦ Oct. 27 at 1:30: "The Apartment" (1960, Billy Wilder). ♦ Oct. 27 at 4: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972, Bernardo Bertolucci). ♦ Repertory nights. Oct. 26-27 at 6:30: "The Barefoot Contessa" (1954, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Kino silents. Oct. 23 at 7:30: "Nosferatu" (1922, F. W. Murnau). ♦ Oct. 24 at 8: An evening with Ken Burns. ♦ Oct. 25 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Weekend" (1967, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Oct. 26 at 2, 4:30, and 7:45 and Oct. 27 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Trembling Before G-d" (2001, Sandi Simcha Dubowski). ♦ Oct. 28-29 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Woman in the Window" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Oct. 23-24 at 2, 5:30, and 8:40: A new print of "Solaris" (1972, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Starting Oct. 25 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "Quai des Orfèvres" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Dec. 17: Neo-noir films. Oct. 29 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Garde à Vue" (1981, Claude Miller; in French).

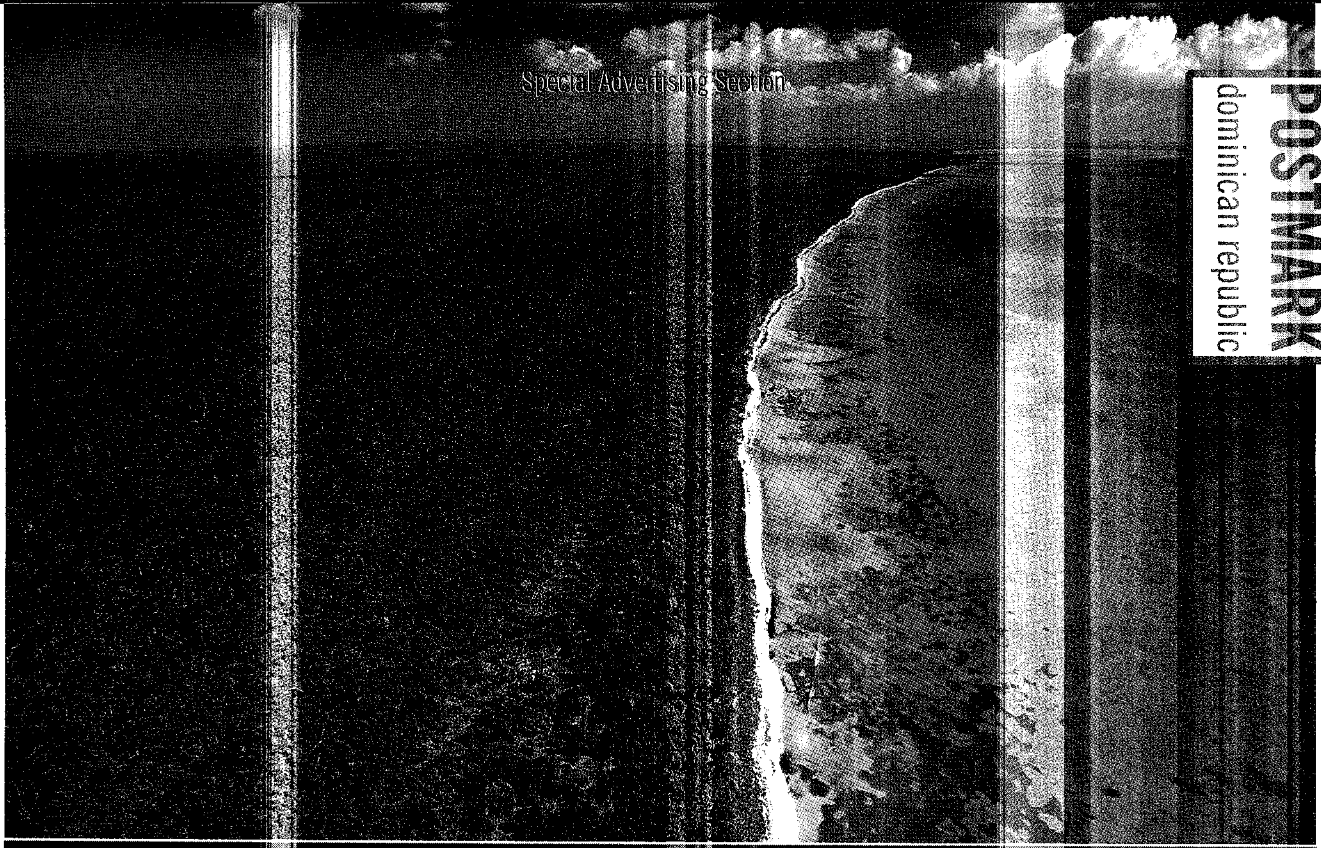
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
127 E. 23rd St. (777-4900)—The museum has opened a temporary home for its Film and Media programs in the restored Gramercy Theatre. Through Nov. 7: "To Save and Project," a celebration of film preservation. Oct. 24 at 2: "Magic City" (1954, Nikos Koundouros; in Greek). ♦ Oct. 24 at 3:45: "Fake Fruit Factory" (1986, Chick Strand) and "Portrait of Jason" (1967, Shirley Clarke). ♦ Oct. 25 at 4:15: "Nine Lives/We Die Alone" (1957, Arne Skouen; in Norwegian). ♦ Oct. 27 at 3: "Prix de Beauté (Miss Europe)" (1930, Augusto Genina). ♦ Oct. 28 at 2: "The Exile" (1947, Max Ophuls). ♦ Through Nov. 21: "Variations on an Enigma," a tribute to the actress Delphine Seyrig. Oct. 24 at 6:15: "Last Year at Marienbad" (1961, Alain Resnais; in French). ♦ Oct. 25 at 2: "A Doll's House" (1973, Joseph Losey). ♦ Oct. 25 at 9: "Daughters of Darkness" (1971, Harry Kümel; in French). ♦ Oct. 26 at 1:30: "Pull My Daisy" (†). ♦ Oct. 26 at 4: "Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles" (1975, Chantal Akerman; in French). ♦ Oct. 27 at 5 and Oct. 28 at 6: "India Song" (1975, Marguerite Duras; in French). ♦ Oct. 27 at 7:30: "The Garden That Tilts" (1975, Guy Gilles; in French). ♦ Oct. 28 at 4: "The Black Windmill" (1974, Don Siegel).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Oct. 25-26: "Trainspotting" (1996, Danny Boyle).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Oct. 26 at 2: Short animated films presented by the keyboardist Ben Model. ♦ Oct. 26 at 5:30, 8, and 10 and Oct. 27 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "Trembling Before G-d" (2001, Sandi Simcha Dubowski).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Oct. 31: "Scary Movies: Thirty Years of Horror." Oct. 23 at 2 and 6:30 and Oct. 27 at 5: "Horror Express" (1972, Eugénio Martin). ♦ Oct. 23 at 4 and 8:30: "Possession" (1981, Andrzej Zulawski; in French). ♦ Oct. 24 at 1 and 5: "It's Alive" (1974, Larry Cohen). ♦ Oct. 24 at 3 and Oct. 29 at 3:30 and 7:30: "Lemora: A Child's Tale of the Supernatural" (1972, Richard Blackburn). ♦ Oct. 26 at 2: "Ring" (1998, Hideo Nakata; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 26 at 4 and Oct. 27 at 7: "Ring 2" (1999, Nakata; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 27 at 9: "Ring 0: Birthday" (2000, Norio Tsuruta; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 29 at 5:30 and 9:30: "Shock a.k.a. Beyond the Door 2" (1976, Mario Bava).

POSTMARK
dominican republic



The Dominican Republic, which Columbus called the "the fairest land under heaven," has three-thousand miles of uninterrupted shoreline.

Photos courtesy of Tourism Office of the Dominican Republic

ISLAND EDEN

SCOTT DOGGETT

The evening sky over the Plaza de la Hispanidad announces itself with a thunderous clap. By the time diners rise from their tables in Santo Domingo's grand square, it's apparent they aren't going to elude the marble-sized raindrops crashing around them. Watching these patrons scurry across the cobblestone square into nearby bars and restaurants, I find myself pondering how many times such scenes have played out here since Diego Columbus, son of the famous explorer, lived in the palace-turned-museum at the square's edge.

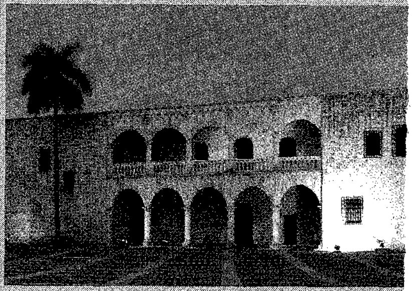
I've visited Santo Domingo's splendid Zona Colonial many times, and I've come to feel cheated if I'm not treated to at least one brief deluge as I meander the narrow streets of the easily walked neighborhood. For me, few destinations are as exotic as this—the site of the first European city in the Americas—and few lend themselves so well to imaginary trips to another age.

On this particular evening I appreciated the rain from a table just inside the doorway of La Crêperie, where I spoiled myself with sweet crêpes and decadent treats. La Crêperie is one of a half-dozen restaurants occupying colonial-era warehouses lining the eastern edge of the plaza. A massive coral-and-stone wall flanks the plaza's western edge; its builders hoped it would discourage pirates.

Earlier that day, I bought an authentic silver-cross doubloon at the Museo de las Atarazanas just around the corner. The little-visited museum is filled with items plucked from ships that sank in the Caribbean centuries ago. To pay its bills, the cash-strapped organization sometimes sells coins recovered from Spanish galleons lost to hurricanes and battles with pirates.

Also that day, from a rifleman's embrasure in the Fortaleza Ozama—the oldest colonial military edifice in the New World—I spied a cruise ship preparing to anchor at the nearby docks. The colonial district of Santo Domingo is filled with such forts, but they didn't prevent English sea captain and privateer Sir Francis Drake from capturing the city in 1586 and collecting a ransom for its return to Spain.

Here, I feel free



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The **Dominican**Republic
a land of sensations

For its headquarters, the Drake party used the Catedral Primada de América. I visited its fourteen interior chapels and for a good while I stared at its magnificent vaulted ceilings and wondered how they'd managed to survive the hundreds of years of Caribbean weather, the occasional pirate, and normal wear and tear.

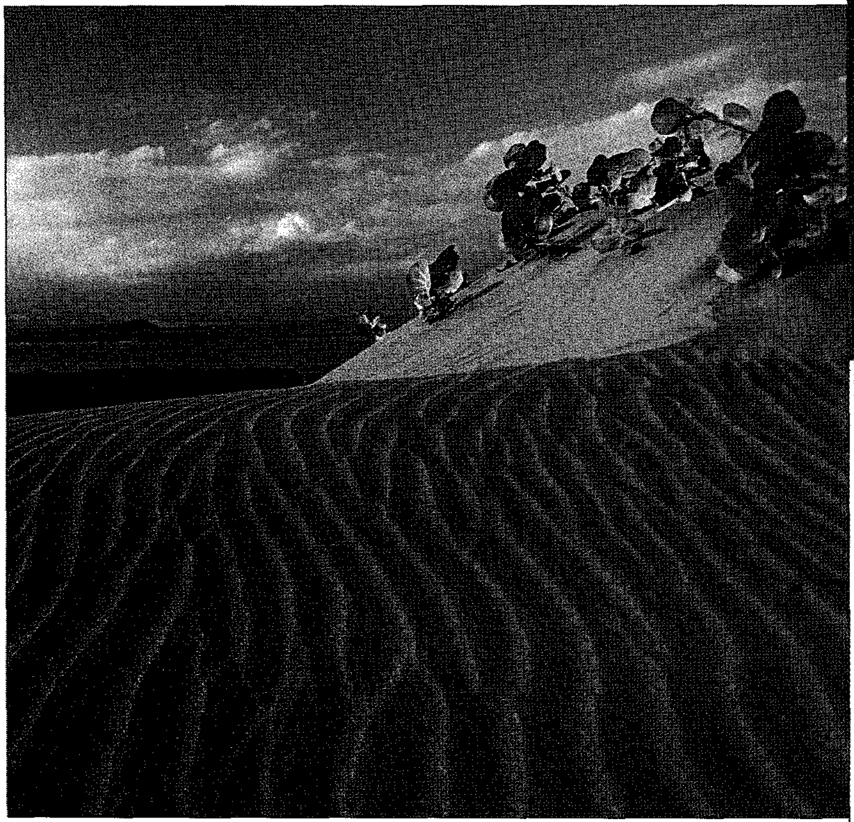
I ended my most recent visit to the old section of Santo Domingo the way I always do—with a Dominican cigar and a glass of iced rum at a table outside El Conde Restaurant, next to the Parque Colón, a picturesque square in front of the cathedral. The tables are perfect perches for people-watching, and on this evening the varied social rituals of Dominicans and their foreign guests entertained me for hours.

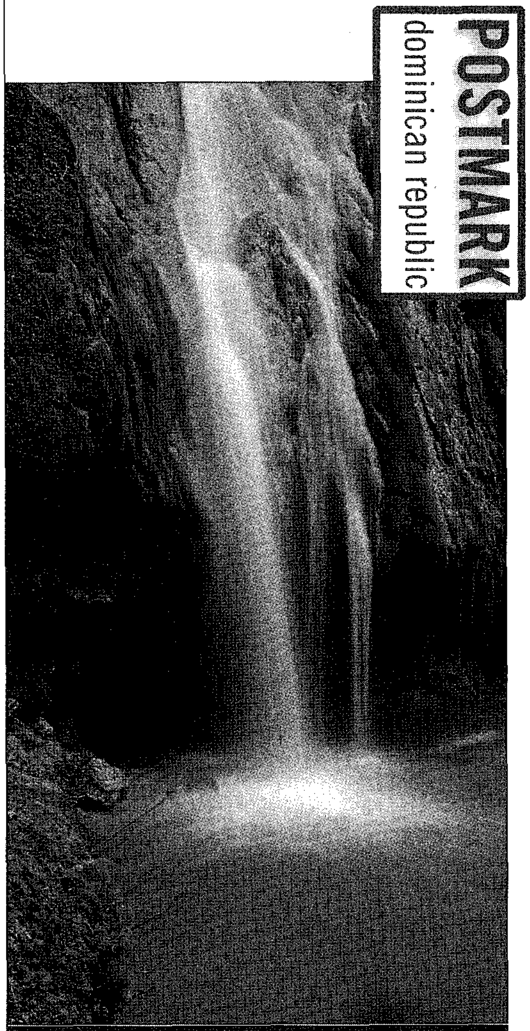
I flew from the south coast to the north the next day, a one-hour flight that was a joy for the gorgeous island views provided. The north coast is home to several famous seaside towns, among them Sosúa and Puerto Plata, but for the nightlife I prefer Cabarete. The town is situated on a bay that's world famous for windsurfing, and on the day I arrived, powerful gusts blew distant windsurfers from whitecap to whitecap like colorful paper triangles.

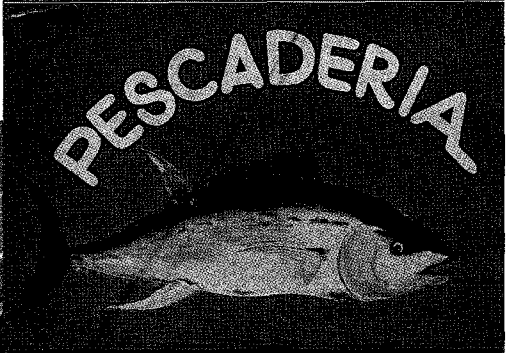
That evening, like most in Cabarete, rock bands jammed in beachside bars and hard-bodied twentysomethings from Europe and North America drank and danced till dawn. Although now fortysomething, I had no trouble making new friends with several fun-loving Generation Nexters, sharing sandwiches with them at Ohno's Bar just before sunrise in a failed bid to stave off a hangover. Cabarete is small enough to walk end to end in thirty minutes; I reached my hotel without incident.

I was amazed to return to the beach at noon to find all the diehard partiers from the night before not only upright, but actually darting across the bay propelled by unseen forces that made their sails snap like firecrackers. From a beverage stand at bay's edge, I savored a few glasses of ice-cold mango juice while I admired the windsurfers, and wondered which I'd later meet and celebrate life with in the hours to come.

(Scott Doggett is the author of Lonely Planet Publications' guidebook to the Dominican Republic and is a regular contributor to the Los Angeles Times.*)*







Aside from its beaches, the Dominican Republic has green hills and mountainous terrain with waterfalls and crashing rivers; elsewhere, portions are desert.

For more information on travelling to the Dominican Republic, visit dominicana.com.do or in New York, call 212-588-1012/14.

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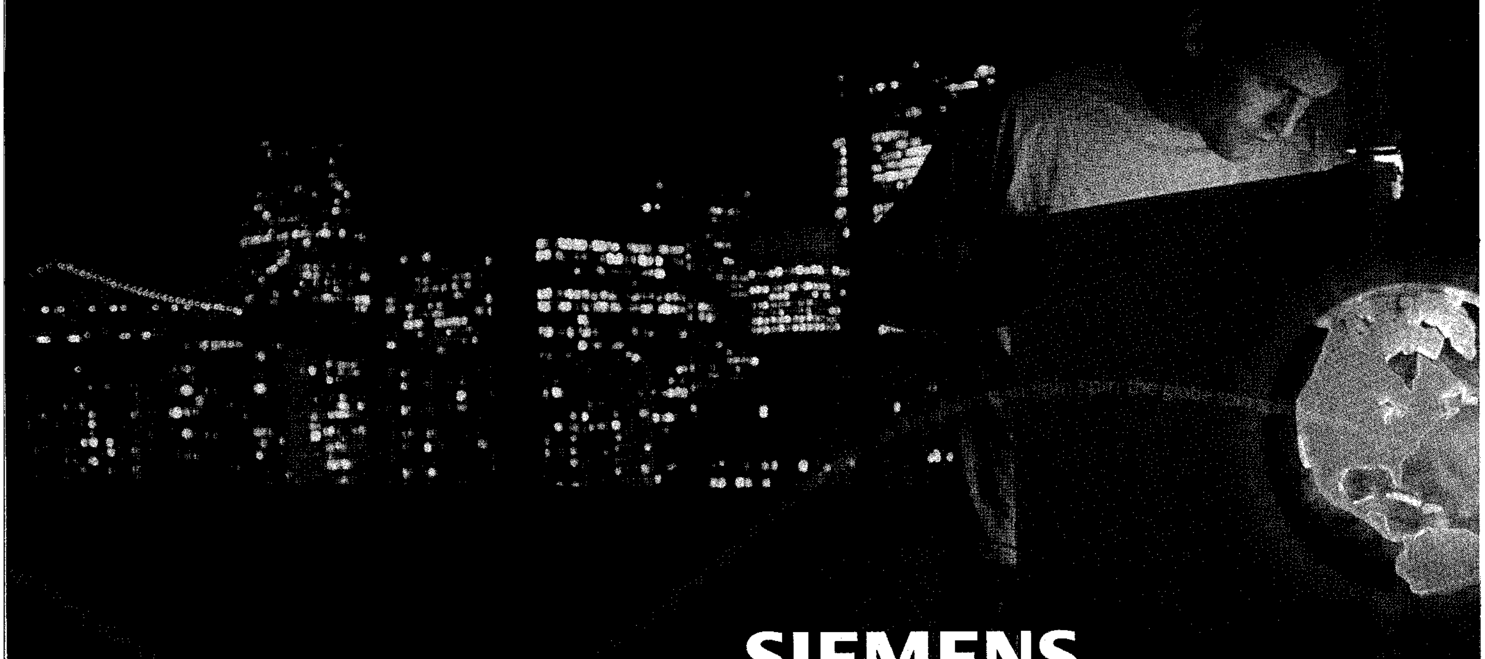

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
HE'S NO. 19

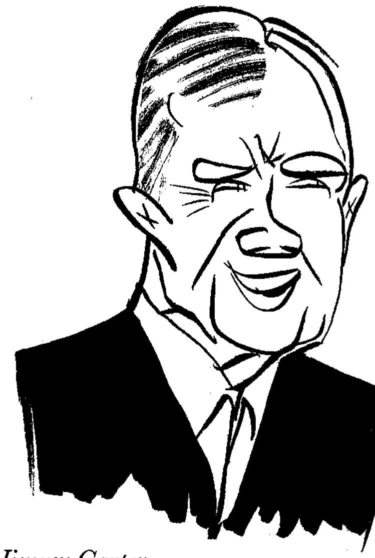
In the hundred and one years since the Nobel Peace Prize was first awarded, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has given it to citizens of the United States eighteen times. When Jimmy Carter travels to Oslo in December to collect his medal and his check, he'll make it nineteen. In Nobel Peace Prizes, as in so much else, America is No. 1.

The Americans are an interesting group. They include five Secretaries of State and one Vice-President, Charles G. Dawes (1925). As was widely noted last week, Carter is the third Peace Prize President, after Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. T.R., the boisterous, big-stick Rough Rider, was the first American winner, in 1906, for bringing representatives of Japan and Russia to a retreat in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and keeping them there until they agreed to end the Russo-Japanese War.

T.R.'s feat in New Hampshire foreshadowed Carter's in Maryland, where, in 1978, he wheedled Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin into signing the Camp David Accords. There has been peace, albeit a cold peace, between Egypt and Israel ever since. This, the Norwegian committee said the other day in its announcement of the award to Carter, was "in itself a great enough achievement to qualify for the Nobel Peace Prize." The lands of Israel and Palestine have been anything but peaceful in the past two years; still, as a senior official in the office of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told the *Times*, the treaty Carter brokered "is still the basic building block for any future peace agreement between Israel and the Arab world."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The Nobel Committee did not mention Carter's other great diplomatic achievement as President, the Panama Canal treaties, but it probably should have. In negotiating the transfer of the canal's management to the Panamanians, Carter was taking up a task that Presidents Johnson, Nixon, and Ford had regarded as strategically essential but politically toxic. They were right on both counts. Holding on to the canal would have guaranteed an indeterminate future of violence, sabotage, regional instability, and perhaps even guerrilla war. The campaign against Carter's "giveaway" became the organizing and fund-raising engine that propelled its leader, Ronald Reagan, to the forefront of the Republican Party. Reagan insisted that the treaties would be a mortal threat to American security. Once in the White House, he wisely consigned such nonsense to the memory hole. Today, the Panama Canal is about as much of a flash point as the Gowanus Canal.



Jimmy Carter

Carter has as much or more in common with the private citizens among the American laureates as he does with the high officials. Like Jane Addams (1931), the pioneering Chicago social worker, Carter, in his house-building work for Habitat for Humanity, has labored on behalf of the poor, face to face and with his own hands. Like Elihu Root (1912), the first president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carter heads a "non-governmental organization." (But while Carnegie is a think tank, the Carter Center is more of a do tank.) Like Norman E. Borlaug (1970), the agronomist who spurred the "Green Revolution," Carter has made concrete improvements in the lives of the Third World's poorest, via the Carter Center's unglamorous, little-known, and successful programs for the control of river blindness and the eradication of guinea-worm disease.

The chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee had the ill grace to tell the press that the award to Carter should be interpreted as a rebuke to President Bush, whose policy toward Iraq Carter has criticized. The controversy points to another stone in the mosaic of American laureates: protest. Linus Pauling (1962), the chemist and nuclear-test-ban advocate, Jody Williams (1997), the anti-land-mine campaigner, and, above all, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964), were dissenting outsiders. In a small way, Carter partakes of that tradition, too.

Except for his fellow service-academy graduate Dwight Eisenhower, no President of the twentieth century spent more years in uniform than Carter. Yet it is fair to say, as John O'Sullivan, of *National Review*, wrote the other day, that "Carter waged war like a pacifist." (O'Sullivan was referring to the aborted mission to rescue the Americans held hostage in Iran throughout 1980.) But Carter, both as President and as an ex-President, has also waged peace like a warrior. We customarily admire a certain ruthlessness in the makers of war—a willingness to do what is necessary, a recognition that moral purity is ultimately impossible in a fallen world, an understanding that ends sometimes really do justify means. "Carter has put in more amiable sofa time with more despots than anyone," a commentator sneered in print last week. And it's probably true. But if flattering a tyrant is what it takes to manipulate him into ceding power peacefully, releasing a few political prisoners, or agreeing to a ceasefire, then Carter is willing to do what it takes. And the only casualty is the esteem in which he is held by the armchair generals of the op-ed brigade.

Carter has been driving the conservative punditocracy to distraction for a quarter of a century. The demonologists of the right have a long litany of grievances against him. As President, he called on Americans to free themselves from an "inordinate fear of Communism." But he was expressing skepticism about Communism's appeal, not indifference to its villainy. He was more prescient than the "realists" who, as late as 1989, were dismissing glasnost as a hoax designed to lull the West into lowering its guard. He pronounced himself surprised at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. (And it was surprising: never before had the Soviets overrun a country beyond the Red Army's stopping point in 1945.) But it was Carter who, for good and for ill, first extended aid to the Afghan resistance. Carter's human-rights crusade vexed some of America's authoritarian allies. But, as Vaclav Havel has repeatedly pointed out, it also demoralized the apparatchiks, and heartened the dissidents, of Eastern Europe. As a freelance diplomatic meddler, Carter has given no less offense. For example, earlier this year, "he became the first U.S. ex-President to pay homage to Fidel Castro in Havana," as the *Post* put it last week. But that's not how the island's dissidents saw his public dressing-down of the maximum leader. Carter has often erred; anyway, no one could be right as consistently as he has sometimes seemed to think himself. (The secular humanists who worked for him in the White House, including the undersigned, did not regard his initials as coincidental.) But Jimmy Carter honors the Nobel Peace Prize as surely as it honors him.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

EARLY WOUNDS DEPT.
SADDAM ON THE COUCH

For decades, Dr. Jerrold Post has been treating patients in the usual way, providing fifty-minute doses of psychotherapy in his home office in Bethesda, Maryland, surrounded by the requisite framed diplomas, primitive artifacts, and Kleenex boxes. But many of his most challenging cases have been referred to him by the evening news. As the director of George Washington University's Political Psychology program and the founding director of the C.I.A.'s Center for the Analysis of Personality and Political Behavior, Post is a pioneer in the field of political-personality profiling. He may be the only psychiatrist who has specialized in the self-esteem problems of both Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

Some people regard the extension of psychology into the realm of world affairs as a kind of quackery. But to Post, a short, amiable grandfather with a thatch of gray hair, psychology is no longer on the periphery of political life. "Terrorism is really at the nexus of psychology and politics," he said the other day in his office, "because terrorism is a vicious species of psychological warfare waged through the media." He pointed out that the world today seems increasingly subject to the whims of relatively unknown and unstable rulers. (Post calls them "pop-up leaders.") "We have satellite photography that can zero in on the dimples on a golf ball," he said, "but we can't peer into the minds of our adversaries."

Since last year's terrorist attacks, Post has been consulting confidentially with the Defense Department and the F.B.I. Next month, his conclusions about the mental health of Saddam Hussein and other despots will be published in a collection of essays called "Know Thy Enemy," which he helped write and edit.

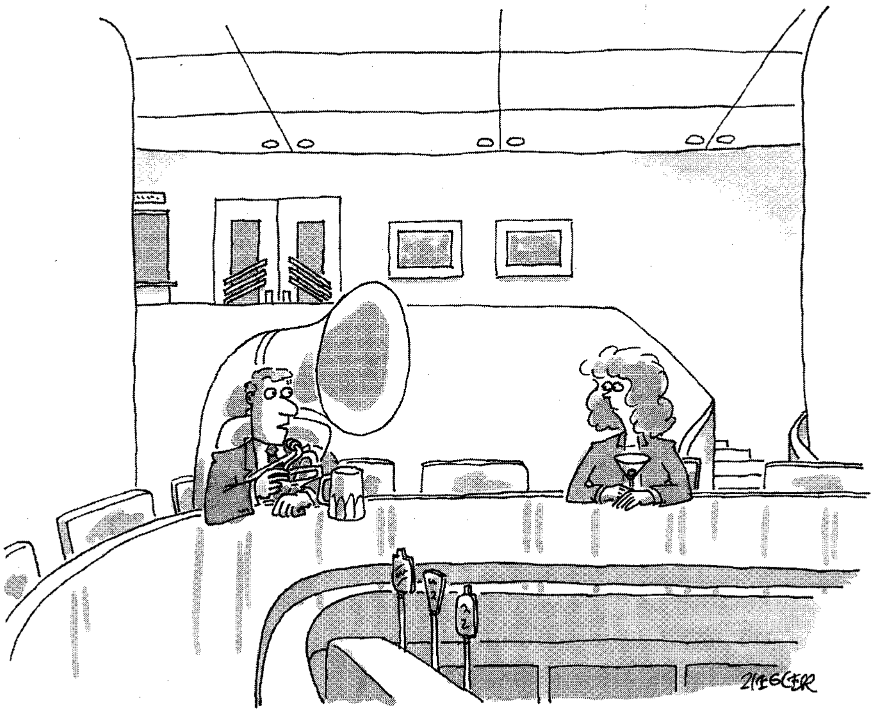
Post's diagnosis of Saddam Hussein, which appears in a chapter that was co-written with an Israeli historian named Amatzia Baram, may surprise some readers. Saddam "is not a madman," the doctor insists. "It's too simple to just say he's crazy." Baram, who has been studying Saddam for more than twenty years, says, "He may be a psychopath, but he's very sane." Post points out that although Saddam is "dangerous in the extreme," he remains "a judicious, effective political calculator who is by no means irrational, but is using different premises of rationality." As a result, the authors suggest, "we can do a lot to predict" his behavior. And although Post does not want to appear critical of the officials who are charting our Iraq policy, he is worried that some recent steps by the Bush Administration may prove, as he puts it, "counterproductive."

In the style of classic psychological case studies, the chapter on Saddam opens with a detailed portrait of the patient's miserable childhood, beginning with his prenatal history. Under a subheading, "The Wounded Self," the authors reveal that Saddam was born in 1937 to a severely depressed mother. A recent widow, she was so distraught over the loss of both her husband and an older son that she tried repeatedly to abort Saddam and to commit suicide. A neighboring Jewish family, according to Baram, intervened and saved Saddam's life. (Baram says that this family, who now live in Tel Aviv, refuse to be identified because they are afraid of being blamed for allowing Saddam to be born.) Saddam's mother handed him off to a relative until he was three years old, when she remarried. Although she took the boy back, Saddam's new stepfather apparently despised and abused him. "These early experiences can be seen as profoundly wounding Saddam's emerging self-esteem," the authors write. From the age of ten, Saddam was reared by an uncle, who encouraged him to dream of becoming a nationalist Arab hero, like Saladin. Saddam's childhood experiences, the authors conclude, led him to grow up believing that the only reliable means of survival was ruthless force.

Post believes that Saddam suffers from "malignant narcissism," and considers him to be a crafty survivor who will cling to power at any cost. He believes that Saddam is unlikely ever to be persuaded to yield his weapons of mass destruction, as the United States has called on him to do. Post also says that it's unrealistic to think that Saddam will accept any negotiated settlement that involves his own exile or removal from power. As he puts it, "This is a man who will always be power maximizing." And he is concerned that the President's talk of "regime change" may be dangerous. "To the extent that Saddam comes to believe he has no way out, it backs him into a corner," Post said. "I'd worry about exaggerated retribution."

Post emphasizes that what he can offer is only an informed psychological opinion of Saddam, and not a medical diagnosis. After all, he has never been able to ask Saddam whether he's had recurring dreams about showing up naked in math class. But the doctor says that he'd prefer never to see the Iraqi leader on his couch. In the first place, after the years he has spent studying Saddam, there's very little about him that he still finds puzzling. And there's one thing he says he knows for sure: "If Saddam Hussein was in my office, I'd run."

—Jane Mayer

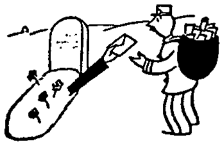


"Cigarettes used to be a pretty good prop, but they don't seem to work for me anymore."

• •

STRICTLY BUSINESS DEPT.

THE NEXT DON



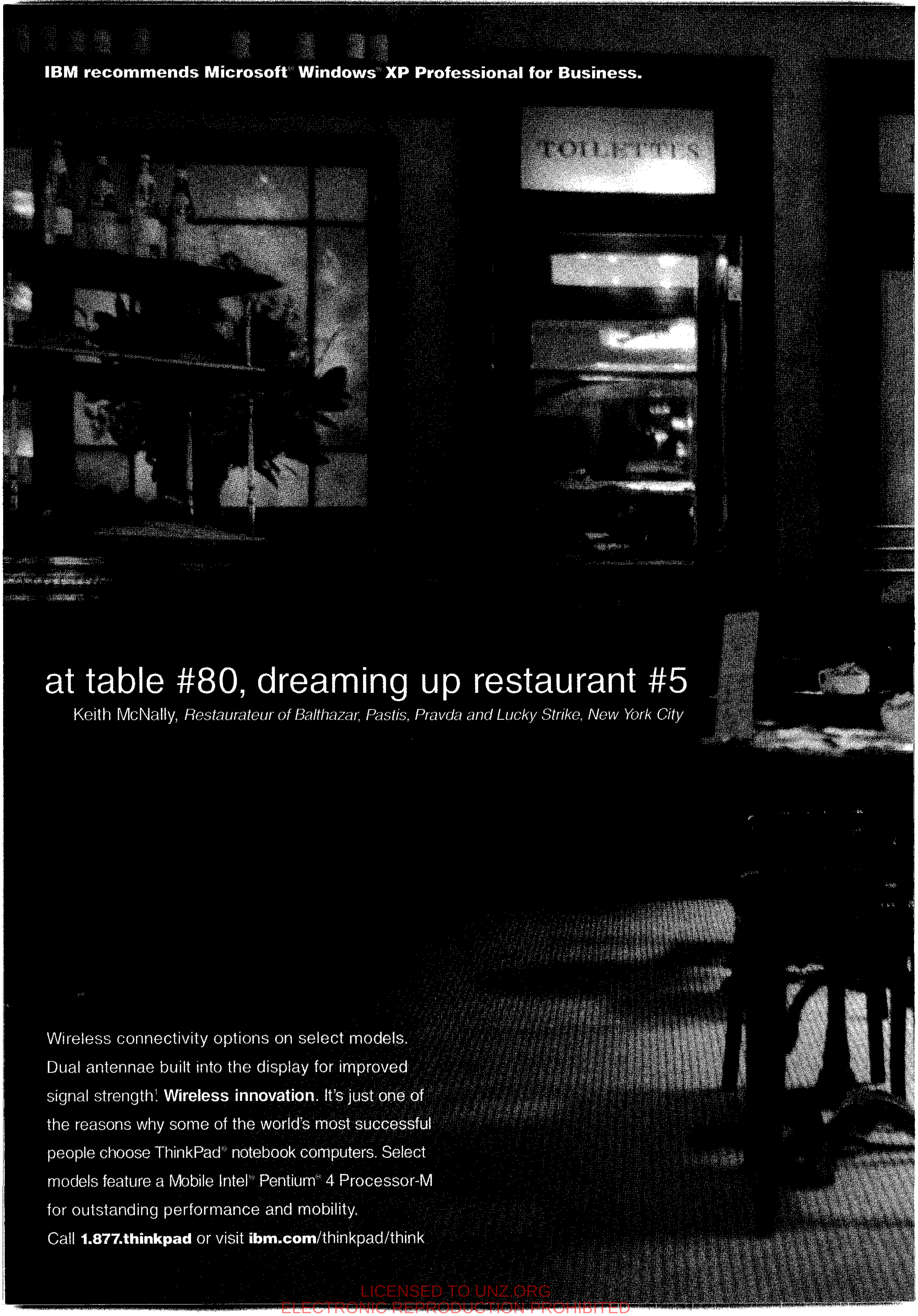
Like Mark Twain or Jimi Hendrix, Mario Puzo, who died in 1999, has been posthumously prolific. "Omertà," the last installment in his Mafia saga, was published a year after his death, and "The Family," a novel he'd started about mobsters, of a sort, in fifteenth-century Rome, was polished up by his companion, Carol Gino, and published last fall. But, because there is only so much writing a dead man can do, a call has gone out for a living writer capable of reviving the Puzo franchise.

Last Tuesday, Jonathan Karp, who was Puzo's editor at Random House, sent an e-mail to a handful of literary agents, soliciting an author for a new book about the Corleones, tentatively titled "The Godfather Returns." (Outlines are due November 4th; the winner will be picked by Random House and the Puzo estate.) The kind of writer Karp hopes to find, the e-mail explains, is "someone who is in roughly the same place in life Mario Puzo was when he wrote 'The Godfather'—at mid-career, with two acclaimed literary novels to his credit, who writes in a commanding and darkly comic omniscient voice." These specifications bring a few writers to mind—Jeffrey Eugenides, David Foster Wallace, Ethan Hawke—who could do a lot more with, say, Johnny Fontane. ("They'll have to make me an offer I can't refuse," Eugenides said.)

But it may be worth noting that where Puzo was when he wrote "The Godfather" was disillusioned and broke. His first two novels, "The Dark Arena" and "The Fortunate Pilgrim," had been well reviewed but were not widely read, so, at the age of forty-five, to turn a buck, he decided to crank out his Mob story. There are many ways to look at a life, but one way to look at Puzo's is that he sold out and then spent the rest of his days half regretting it. However rich he got, he was never again taken seriously as a *writer* writer, which is what he had initially set out to be. "I wished like hell I'd written it better," he said of "The Godfather." "I wrote below my gifts in that book."

The author of "The Godfather Returns," then, will have the benefit of hindsight. Facing the indignity of such pulp production, he may elect to compensate for it by writing a good book, one commensurate with his gifts. That, certainly, is Karp's hope. "We're looking for a serious writer who wants to tackle a broader canvas and create a big, popular novel, someone who will continue the story in his or her own voice," he said last week. (He was speaking reluctantly, as he had hoped to keep his search secret, to discourage "every thug with a laptop" from sending him an outline.)

Among the agents who received



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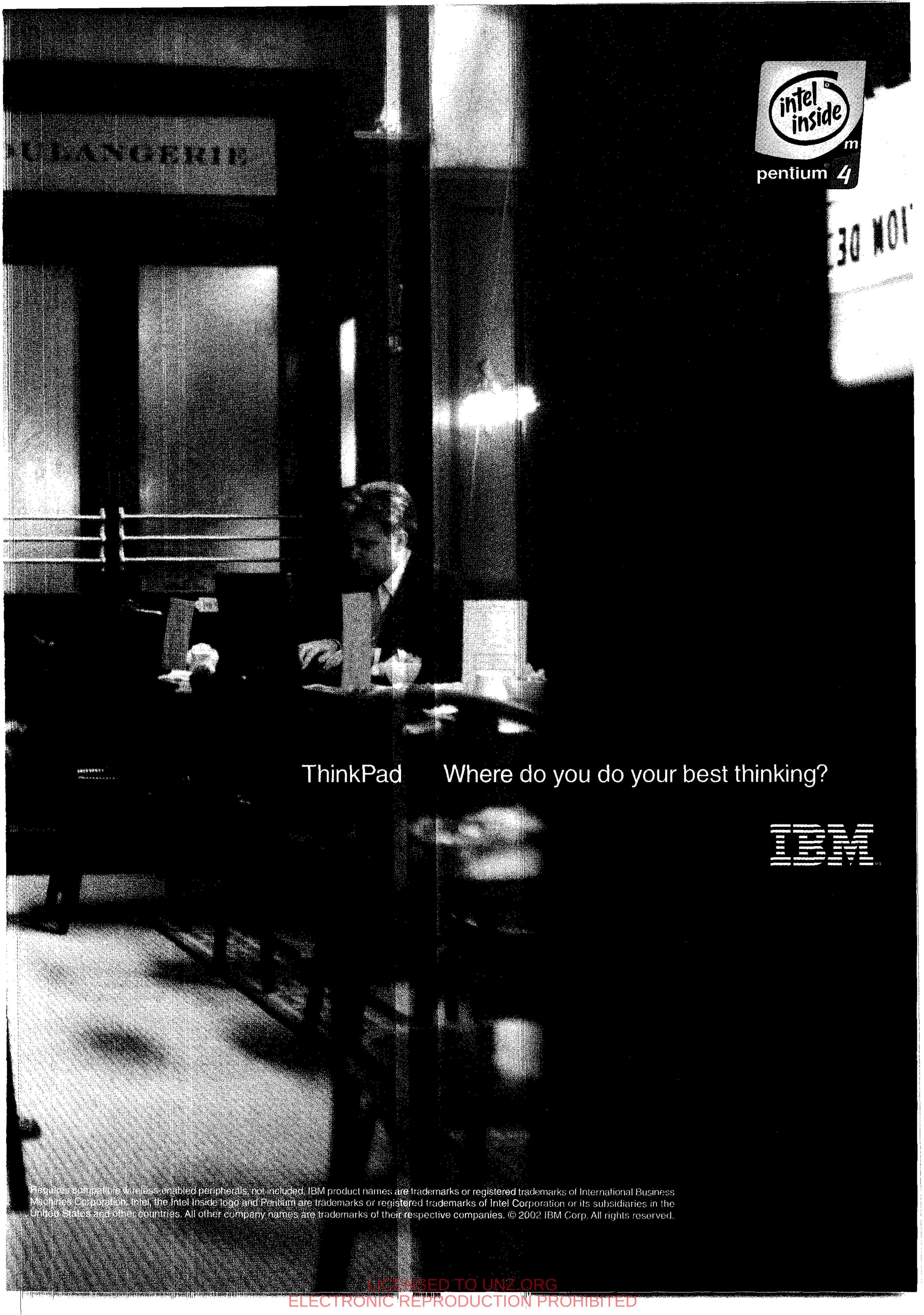
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Karp's e-mail was Richard Pine. "My first reaction was total amusement," Pine said. "It's the biggest-balls project in publishing history"—even more ballsy, he averred, than "Scarlett," Alexandra Ripley's much pilloried but extremely popular 1991 sequel to "Gone with the Wind," because, Pine said, " 'Gone with the Wind' was so long ago."

"Only a fool would do it," Ripley said, from her home in rural Virginia. "A person has to be more than slightly insane to try to write a sequel that everyone will surely be waiting to attack. That's why it took me only a minute to decide to do 'Scarlett.' " The book made her famous and, briefly, wealthy. "To the horror of my accountants, I bought antiques and jewelry and all sorts of doodads, when everyone was telling me to buy stocks and things. Well, now that everyone's stocks are worthless, I still have my jewelry. But I'm selling all that, as I am broke until I finish my next book."

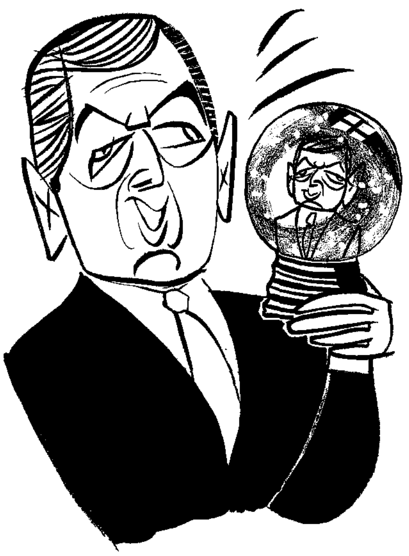
Pine said that none of his clients were suited to this project. "You'd want some old guy who still has something left—with everything to gain and nothing to lose." It is difficult, admittedly, to find writers who believe this to be true of themselves. Other agents who received the e-mail declined to talk about it, and Karp said it was too early to name names.

One man who had something to do with the success of "The Godfather," both novel and movie, and who has some opinions about a Corleone resurrection, is the producer Robert Evans. "Leave it alone," Evans said. "They're just prostituting themselves. I wouldn't want to be the guy who has to write it. Even if you're better you're worse. I'm giving it to you straight: you don't fuck around with a classic."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

DEPT. OF JUSTICE
SNOW-BLIND

David Israelite, the deputy chief of staff at the United States Department of Justice, has a snow globe on the coffee table in his office, in Washington, D.C. It is six inches in circumference, and contains a polyurethane-resin bust of Attorney General John Ashcroft. "The likeness is uncanny," Israelite says. When he shakes the orb, it fills up with plastic snowflakes, and when he winds a little crank at its base, out comes a tinkly rendition of "White Christmas." He thinks it's hilarious. So does his boss, the Attorney General, who is its actual owner.



John Ashcroft

This was not quite what Marshall Reese and Nora Ligorano—Brooklynites in their forties who voted for Ralph Nader—had in mind last year when they created the Ashcroft snow globe. They had intended it to be a work of scathing political art, an indictment of Ashcroft's methods and policies. So when they learned that one of their John Ashcroft snow globes had come into the possession of Ashcroft himself they were, as Reese put it, "shocked."

This is how the Ashcroft snow globe came to be Ashcroft's: In January, the girlfriend of Charles McKenna, an executive assistant U.S. Attorney in Newark, saw the snow globe in the window of a bookstore in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. She bought one for him, and he took it to work, where it soon attracted the admiration of his boss, the U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie. Not long afterward, McKenna went to Williamsburg to buy one for him, too.

Christie had served as counsel to the Bush 2000 campaign's New Jersey team, and Ashcroft paid him a visit in August and noticed the snow globe on a credenza behind his desk. "Is that really me?" Ashcroft asked, chuckling. He picked it up, turned it over, then shook it. "That's really funny," he said. "That's great!" Later, as the Attorney General was preparing to leave, Christie surprised him with a snow globe of his own, which he had asked McKenna to get for him earlier that day.

Tchotchkes aren't just tchotchkes when you work in government. Sometimes they are gifts, and, as Robert Torricelli can attest, there are strict rules about such things. According to a Justice Department spokesman, Christie, as an employee of the Attorney General, is not allowed to give him anything that exceeds ten dollars in value. The snow globe cost a hundred and twenty-five dollars. So Ashcroft immediately had the snow globe funnelled through the proper gift-vetting channels. (He will have to return it to Christie, reimburse him for it, or donate it to the department for the remainder of his tenure.) Meanwhile, Israelite has taken possession of it, and it now sits in his office in a sort of ethics purgatory, awaiting a decision by Justice Department officials. "It's just too funny to keep in storage," Israelite says.

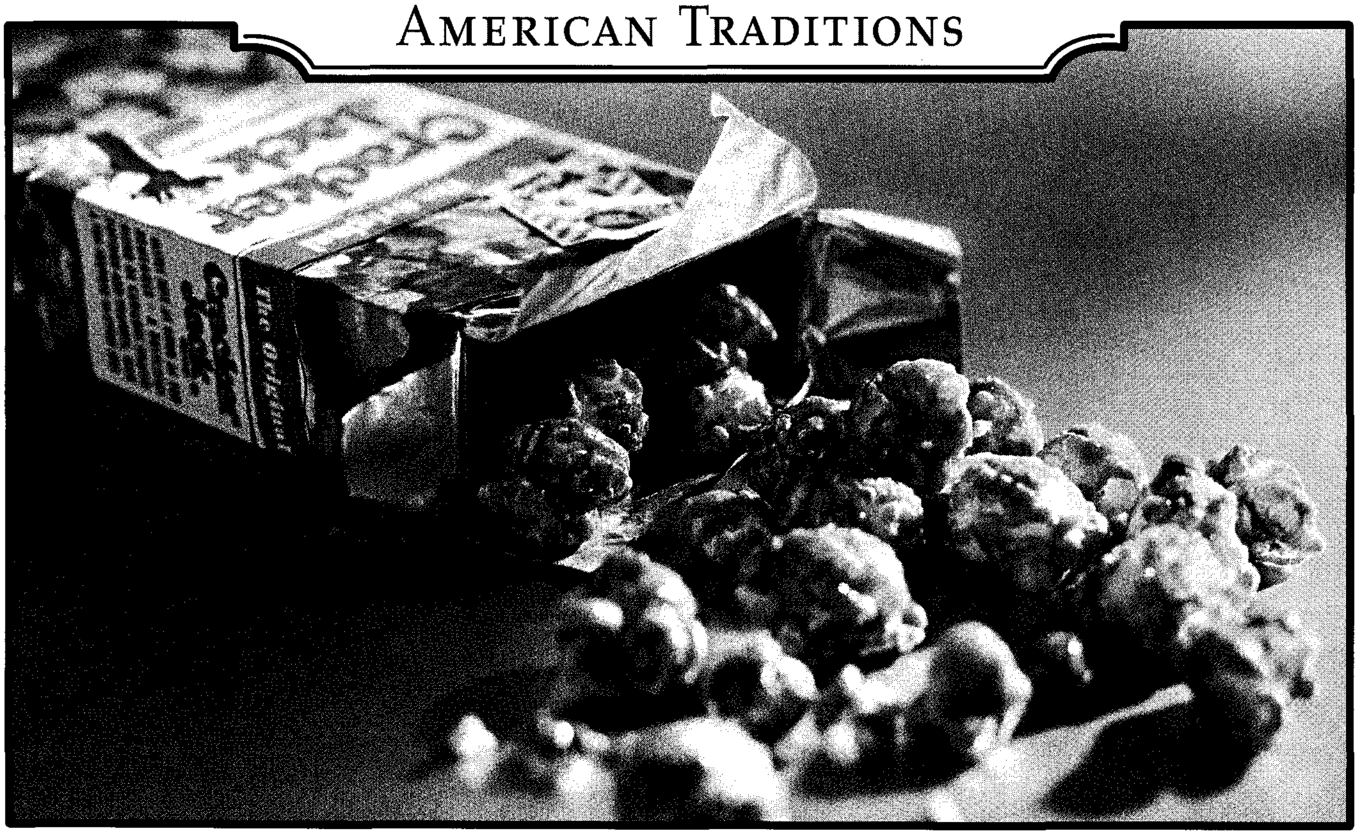
Reese and Ligorano aren't quite sure how to react to such enthusiasm. "Ashcroft seems to have a good sense of humor," Reese, a thin, earnest man with graying hair, said the other day. "But he also seems to have such hubris that he would be blind to the criticism that our art would have of him."

According to Reese, the political commentary is inherent in the snow motif and in the choice of the song "White Christmas." "It's about whiteness and it's about purity," he explained. "We wanted to play on the overtones during his confirmation hearing as to what he, as governor, did in terms of integration of the Missouri schools system, and also his role, as senator, in defeating Ronnie White, a Clinton circuit-court appointee. We like to play with this idea of taking something very innocent and suggesting an undercurrent."

When David Israelite was told about the sentiments behind Reese and Ligorano's snow globe, he was surprised. "It's too bad they feel that way," he said. "We're still looking for an artist to do Ashcroft's official portrait."

—*Jake Tapper*

AMERICAN TRADITIONS



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

DEALING WITH DEADBEATS

The 7-Eleven Corporation and the sovereign state of Argentina have a couple of things in common. Both appreciate the benefits of late-night dining. And both are well acquainted with the adverse effects of suffocating debt. 7-Eleven gained that valuable experience in the nineteen-eighties, when it was losing a billion dollars a year and had creditors banging on its doors. Argentina went through it a decade later, when a slowing economy, an overvalued currency, and government mismanagement left the country unable to keep up with payments on the hundred and forty-one billion dollars that it owed to foreign lenders.

There was, however, one key difference between 7-Eleven and Argentina. A company can save itself by declaring bankruptcy; a country cannot. When 7-Eleven could no longer pay its bills, its parent company declared Chapter 11, which protected 7-Eleven's assets, put debt payments on hold, and gave it enough breathing room to put together a restructuring plan that persuaded creditors to give the Slurpee another chance. Argentina wasn't so lucky. When it couldn't meet its payments, it simply defaulted on its debt, effectively cutting itself off from the world's capital markets. The economy collapsed, leaving nearly a quarter of the workforce unemployed, and food riots led the government to declare a state of siege.

7-Eleven was allowed to stay in business because Americans have come to see the virtues of bankruptcy—of giving an indebted company a chance to turn itself around. No one gets exactly what he wants from Chapter 11—creditors get a haircut, employees get laid off, and shareholders (usually) get zilch—but it is generally preferable to selling off a company's assets piece by piece. With struggling nations, though, we've historically taken a more Draconian approach. In 1876, when Egypt was struggling to pay down its debt, the British and the French took over the country's finances and diverted more than half its revenue to service the debt. In 1902, in Venezuela, British, Italian, and German warships blockaded ports and shelled towns because Venezuela refused to pay the money it owed them. Creditors have lightened up since then, but the governing principle when a country owes a lot of money hasn't changed much: no pain, no gain—or, rather, pain and no gain.

Unfortunately, the brass-knuckles approach seldom works, for creditors or debtors. The Latin-American debt crisis of the early eighties wreaked havoc on countries and banks alike; more recently, the global economy suffered a series of meltdowns caused by debt-laden countries' desperate schemes to meet their obligations. Once a country starts to sink under the weight of debt, it rarely comes up with a reasonable solution to its problems. More often, as in Argentina, the battle to stay afloat makes things worse. Consequently, the International Monetary Fund is in perpetual fire-alarm mode, giving struggling countries huge bailout packages, which usually fail: Argentina blew through tens of billions of dollars in bailout money before it defaulted.

That's where a Chapter 11 for countries would help most. "Sovereign bankruptcy," as economists call it, would not be a way for countries to skip out on their debts. Instead, it would keep them from wasting billions in futile attempts to stave off the inevitable, and allow them to come up with a reasonable plan to restructure their debt payments. Any restructuring plan would have to be approved by a majority of the creditors, so a deadbeat country would need to come up with real reforms, not quick-fix gimmicks. This may not be exactly a win-win situation—call it a lose-less, lose-less—but it beats riots. "We understand that when it comes to individuals and firms the possibility of a fresh start actually contributes to economic efficiency and social equity," Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, says. "And for this to work you need a system with formal rules. We need a system for countries as well as for companies."

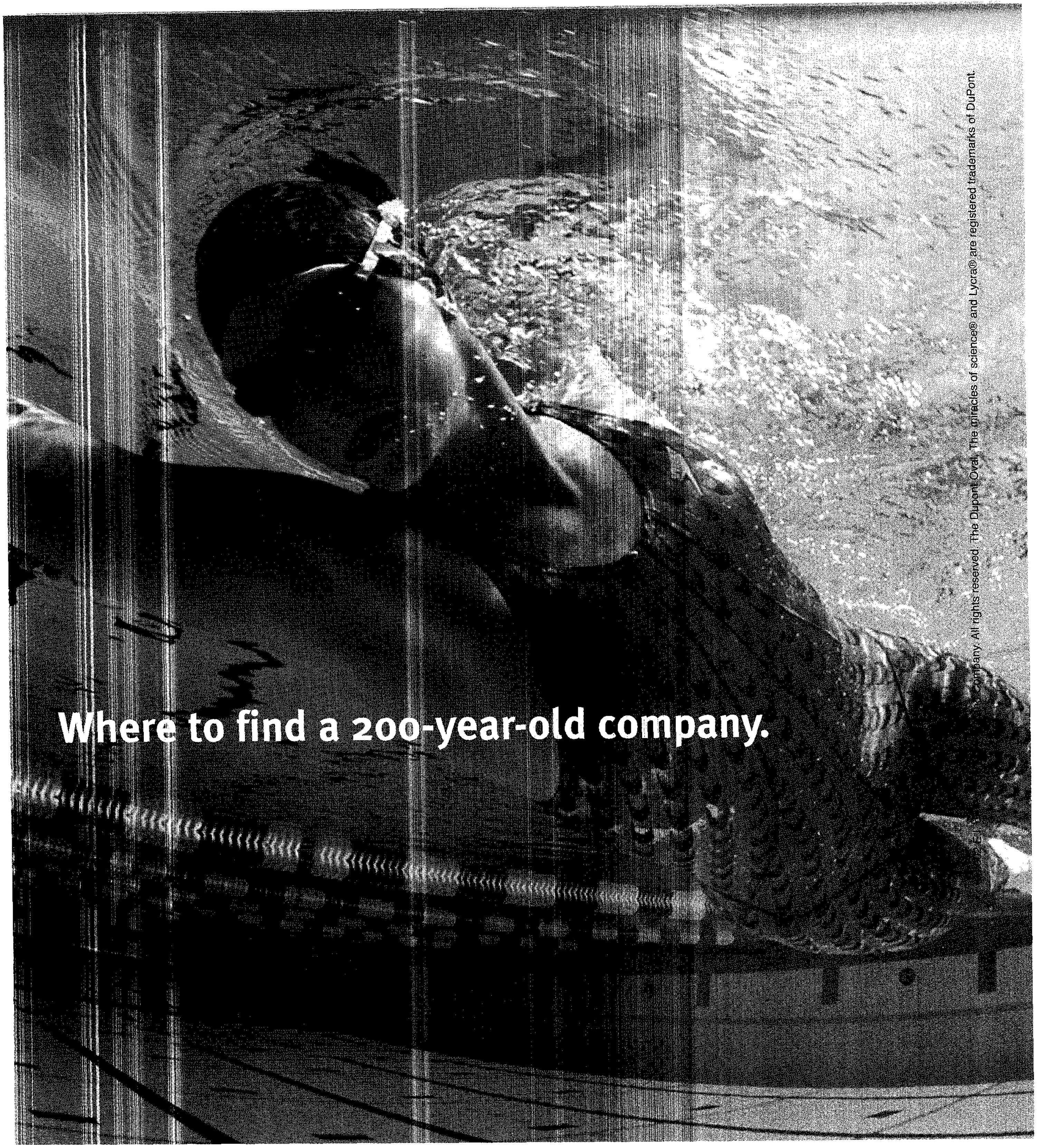
As it happens, the idea for such a system has been around since the days of Adam Smith, who called it "the measure which is both least dishonourable to the debtor, and least hurtful to the creditor." But only in the past year has the idea finally gained support among policymakers, and that's largely because the I.M.F. has got behind it. There are still kinks; for one thing, if the I.M.F. were in charge, it would have to stop giving priority to its own loans over loans made by others. At a meeting in Washington last month, the I.M.F. promised to produce a detailed proposal for a sovereign-bankruptcy system by the spring. Even the Bush Administration supports the idea.

So what stands in the way? Mainly, the opposition of people who make a living lending money. They like to invoke the familiar bugaboo of "moral hazard." Allow bankruptcy protection, they say, and you'll promote recklessness and waste. But markets are exceptionally good at evaluating risk, and if countries really do become more reckless they'll pay the price in higher interest rates and curtailed access to capital. That would be painful in the short run but fruitful in the long run, if it forced countries to be more disciplined.

Two decades ago, almost all loans to developing countries were controlled by a handful of banks; fixing a floundering economy was a job for a dozen or so executives sitting at a table and thrashing out solutions. Today, much of that debt is owned by bondholders around the world, and cozy, old-boy powwows won't cut it anymore. Something like an international bankruptcy court might, though. The global economy has changed. The rules should, too.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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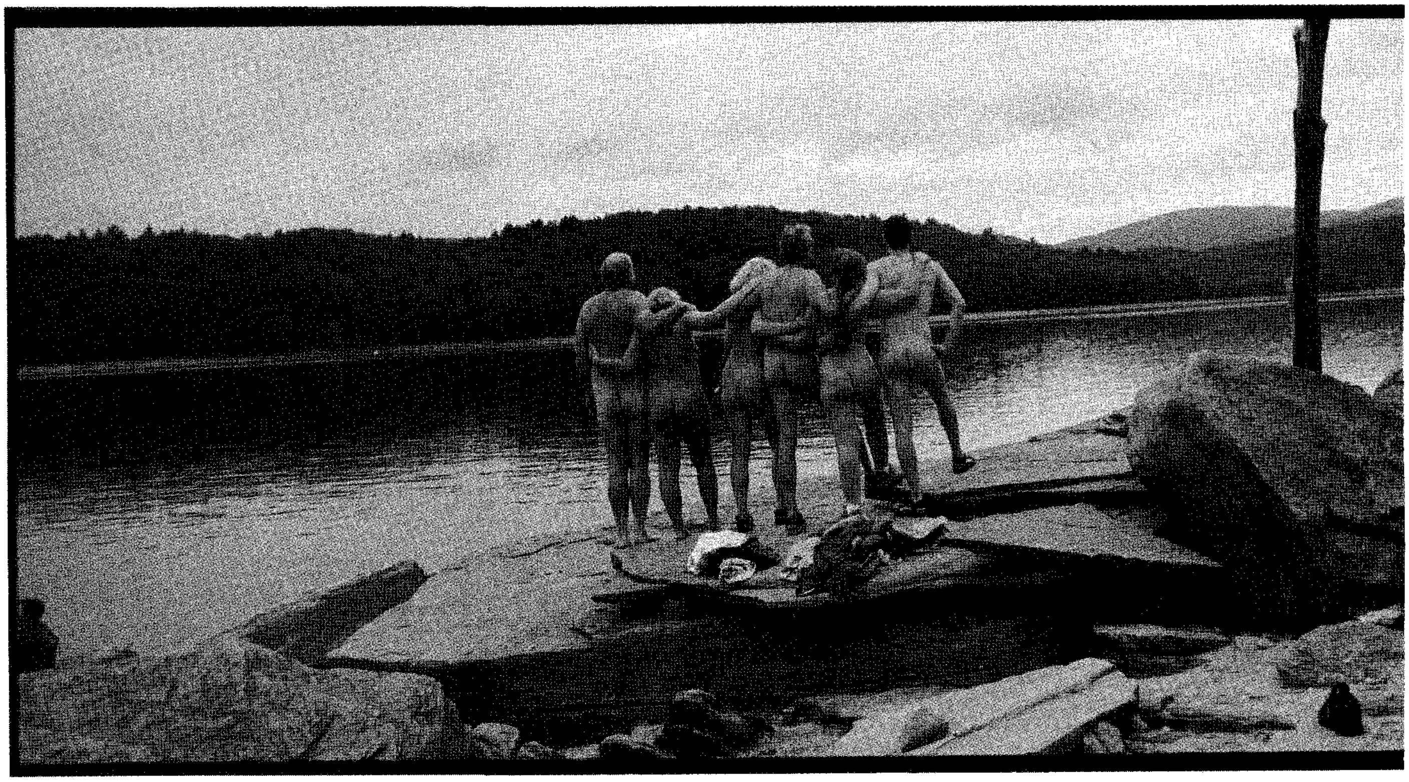
DAY STRIPPERS

Clothing-optional swimmers get into trouble with the natives.

BY MARK SINGER

WILMINGTON, VERMONT

It's not Phil Markham's or Joanne Ruppel's fault, nor is it mine, that I've never seen them naked. On a global scale, I'm still in the majority, but a *lot* of people out there have been present on occasions when Phil and Joanne weren't wearing clothes. (Most of these people, not by chance, were themselves naked.) Phil and Joanne live in Albany, New York, and they spend a good part of each summer in southern Vermont, a latitude where the opportunities to lounge around comfortably outdoors in the nude are delimited by the air temperature and the biting-insect population. During the eight years that they've been a couple—they met in bundled-up circumstances, while skiing, also in Vermont—they've managed to make the most of those opportunities (especially Phil).



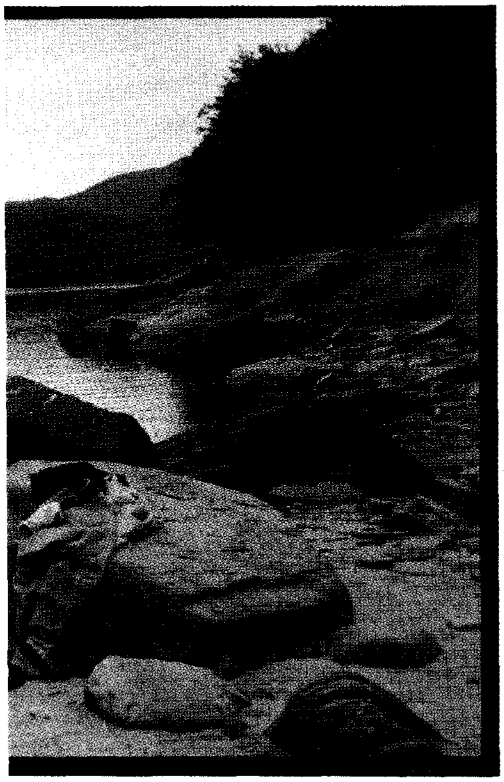
A picnic at the Ledges: "Most people who participate in nude recreation don't call themselves nudists," Phil Markham said. "I'm simply no

In 1980, Phil Markham began making regular pilgrimages to the Ledges, a scenic and popular destination for clothing-optional recreational swimming—what used to be known, in the pre-postmodern era, as skinny-dipping—in the town of Wilmington. He'd been skinny-dipping in western Massachusetts when he first heard about the Ledges, which was by then a not very well-kept Vermont secret. To get to the Ledges from the center of Wilmington, you drive a mile and a quarter east of town on a paved, numbered highway, then head south for a mile or so on a dirt road that terminates in a parking lot next to a sinuous eight-mile-long lake called Harriman Reservoir. From there, it's a hike of several minutes along a root-veined forest trail that leads to a small sandy beach and a quarter-mile stretch of easy-to-negotiate granite shelves, some of them excellent diving platforms, which give the Ledges its name. The view is a hundred-and-eighty-degree panorama of lake, sky, unspoiled shoreline, and timbered mountains.

On a midweek morning in May or September, when the place is barely occupied, or on a crowded midsummer Sunday, when the panorama would typically include two or three hundred naked bodies—male and female (usually more of the former), in various states of fitness and decrepitude—it's a genuinely idyllic spot with a remarkable capacity for evoking proprietary feelings. Markham wouldn't be so bold as to suggest that he owns the Ledges, but he clearly thinks of himself as the site's protector and caretaker. Which is why he was deeply disappointed late last spring when the Wilmington governing council, the Selectboard, passed the Wilmington Public Indecency Ordinance by a 4–1 vote. In explicit language, it stated that what Markham and other well-behaved but naked visitors to the Ledges were engaged in was unlawful. Anyone who knew Markham—and regulars at the Ledges already knew him well—understood that this was not the sort of reproach he would be likely to take, literally or figuratively, lying down.

According to Markham, removing one's clothing in public on a regular basis, even in a secluded spot, does not make a person a nudist. "I don't call myself a nudist, and most people who participate in nude recreation don't call themselves nudists," he said recently. "Although one in four Americans, based on a Roper poll, go skinny-dipping, it's something people like to keep private about themselves. A 'nudist,' by way of Webster's, belongs to a cult. And I'd hardly call one in four Americans doing something cult behavior. The proper term is 'naturist,' which I don't mind, but, basically, I despise labelling of any type. I'm simply not clothing-obsessed."

This nomenclature distinction matters to Markham because he feels that misinformation has been at the heart of the battle over the Ledges. Ostensibly to remedy that problem, during the summer of 2001, in his capacity as a regional representative of the Naturist Action Committee—an offshoot of the Naturist Society, an organization whose membership consists of individuals whom clothing-obsessed types have a careless tendency to refer to as nudists—he founded the Friends of the Ledges. Markham, who has defined the F.O.T.L.'s mission as "solving problems," "communication," and "facilitation," is now in his late forties. Lean, with graying hair, an angular face, and skin that tans easily and deeply, he has a habit of chain-smoking when he contemplates what he regards as the unscrupulous schemes of his adversaries, the proponents of the indecency ordinance. In the past, Markham has had careers in real estate, home remodelling, landscaping, and Christmas-tree farming, but for the last several months he has devoted his energies full time to Ledges-related activism, which he's able to do because his partner, Joanne Ruppel, a trim, healthy-looking dark-haired woman in her early forties, is employed full time as a government research analyst.



clothing-obsessed." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

Markham strives for a please-we're-here-to-help-you demeanor, a tone that might persuade the citizens of Wilmington to rededicate themselves to the classic Vermont live-and-let-live spirit, the ethos that for decades tolerated the social rituals of the Ledges. But more and more frequently—especially when Markham dwells on his opponents' determination to interfere with his pursuit of happiness—he has had difficulty containing himself. The fundamental fact that often seems to elude Markham and many of his fellow Friends of the Ledges (for the most part, summer visitors who legally reside in other states) is that Wilmington is no different from any other Vermont community. And if there's one Vermont creed that trumps live-and-let-live it's the belief that the locals can get along just fine without flatlanders from Albany or Boston or New York City, naked or not, offering them unsolicited advice on how to manage their affairs.

Margaret Frost, the person most clearly responsible for the passage of the Public Indecency Ordinance, no longer speaks to reporters, so it's hard to say precisely what goaded her into action. For more than forty years, the Frost family has owned a small summer cottage on Harriman Reservoir, a rustic abode with an outdoor privy. The cottage sits on less than a quarter acre, in a cluster of similarly modest dwellings, set back a few hundred feet from the water's edge. The Frosts don't have title to actual lakefront property, because the reservoir and its perimeter belong to USGen New

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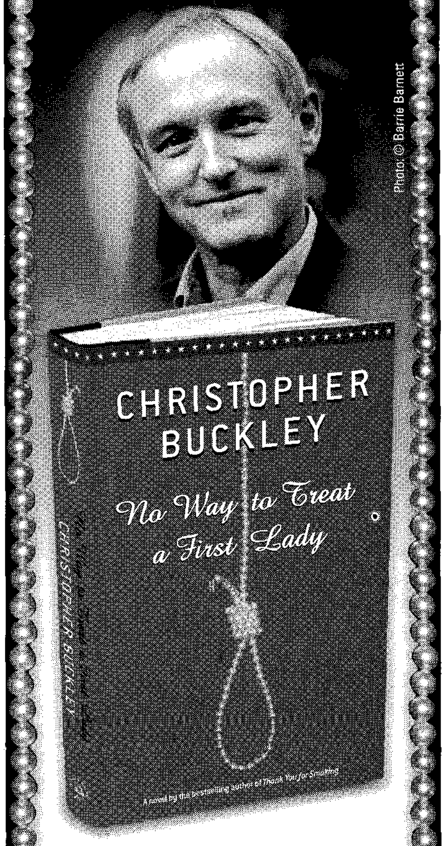
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England, a utility company, which uses it to generate hydroelectric power. Nevertheless, Frost, not unlike Markham, came to think of the sliver of shoreline down the path from her cottage as "her" beach, and she was routinely offended by the scenery about two hundred yards away. What she could see—although, without binoculars, discerning much of anything must have been a challenge—was the result of an informal Balkanization, whereby Ledges users had sorted themselves into peacefully coexisting populations. Heterosexual males and females dominated the section nearest the parking-lot trailhead, and gay men gravitated farther along the trail to a shoreline area that happened to be within view of the Frost family. Some of the gay men were also retreating into the woods for purposes other than mushroom hunting. Evidently, the presence of naked men so close to her property disturbed Margaret Frost. Or was it the particular fact that these naked men slept with other men?

Frost's family had for years lodged complaints with the police department, but Margaret took their concerns public in the summer of 2001, when she began dispatching letters to the editor, making calls to public officials, and distributing shrill handbills. "We own a cabin just north of the infamous Ledges at Harriman Reservoir," one of her broadsides began. "What we see every time we go down to the shore is disgusting, embarrassing and very upsetting. . . .In the cove in front of our cabin there is a large group comprised only of males. . . .We also see nude water skiers, boaters, wind surfers, jet skiers, and shoreline hikers. If you use the lake you can't help but see it. There is no escaping it. There is NO LAW AGAINST NUDITY ANYPLACE in Vermont, EXCEPT RUTLAND. . . . ANYONE can walk down the Main Street in YOUR town STARK NAKED. Unless they touch themselves in an inappropriate manner (who is to say what that might be?) it is perfectly legal. They can stand outside your schools, undress on the sidewalk in front of you (just as males undress in front of us in our cove) and there is NOTHING anyone can do. If you do not believe me, call your local police department and ask them. You and I have as much right to use the Ledges WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT AS THE

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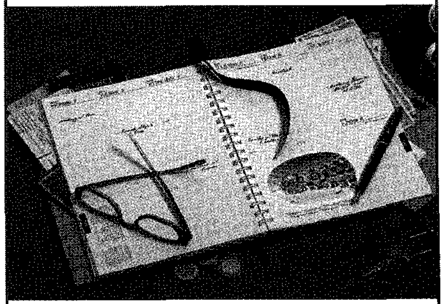

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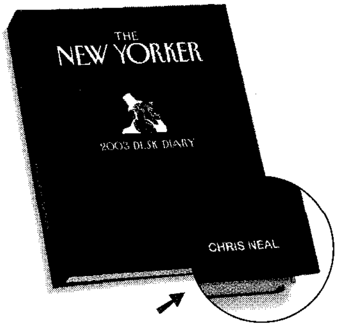

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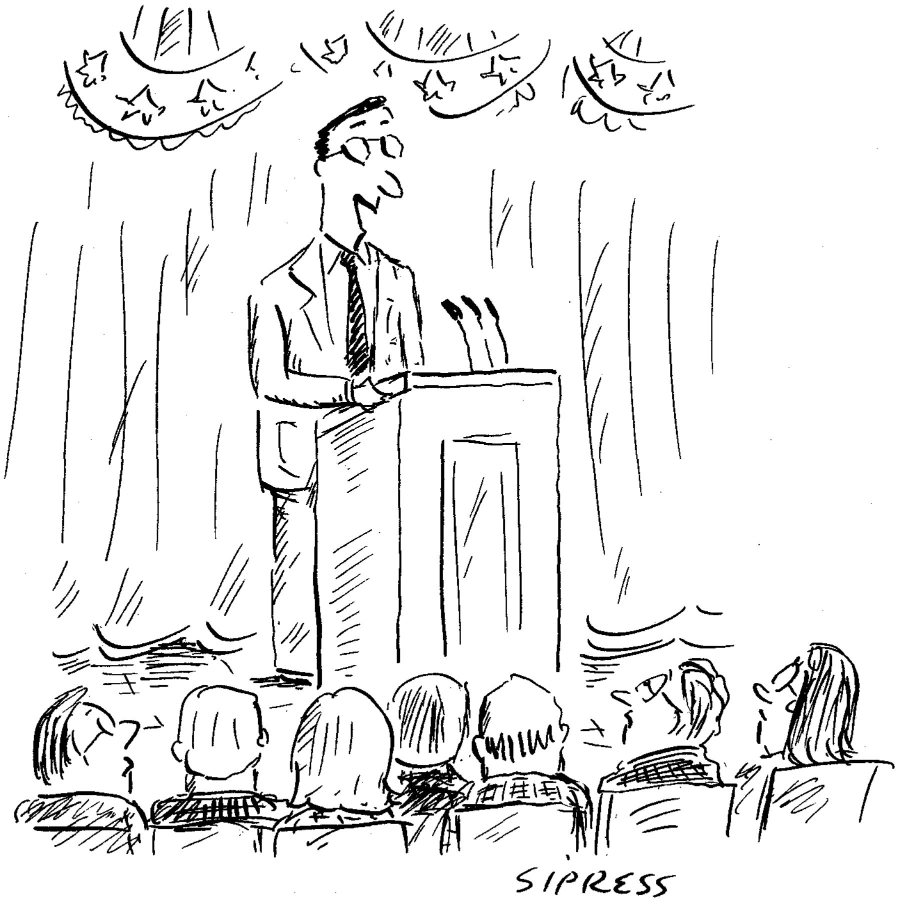
NUDIST. We must not allow these people to jam nudity down our throats. I for one am choking on it!!!"

It was Frost's campaign that galvanized Markham to create the Friends of the Ledges, which in the beginning was mainly a self-policing effort to keep her quiet. Signs were posted along the trails and the shoreline to discourage encroachments on the Frosts or other property owners. "Naturism isn't about sex at all," Markham likes to say. ("Nude is not lewd" is another naturist bromide.) Of course, Margaret Frost believed otherwise, and she began conducting occasional patrols, turning up used condoms and condom wrappers, she said, along paths that branched into the woods from the main trail. When the *Deerfield Valley News*, a weekly paper in Wilmington, reported on the controversy, it noted that the Ledges, in addition to being listed in several reference guides to nude beaches, was included on a gay Web site called www.cruisingforsex.com. These and similar awkward facts and allegations were on the table when the Selectboard allowed Frost to have her say. The board members didn't challenge her claims, but they obviously didn't relish the prospect of instituting, much less enforcing, an indecency ordinance, which the chair of the Selectboard, Fred Skwirut, described as a "last resort." And, presumably, they were relieved when the summer wound down and the notion of an indecency ordinance got dwarfed by September 11th, which meant that for the time being they didn't have to think about who was or wasn't doing what in the woods.

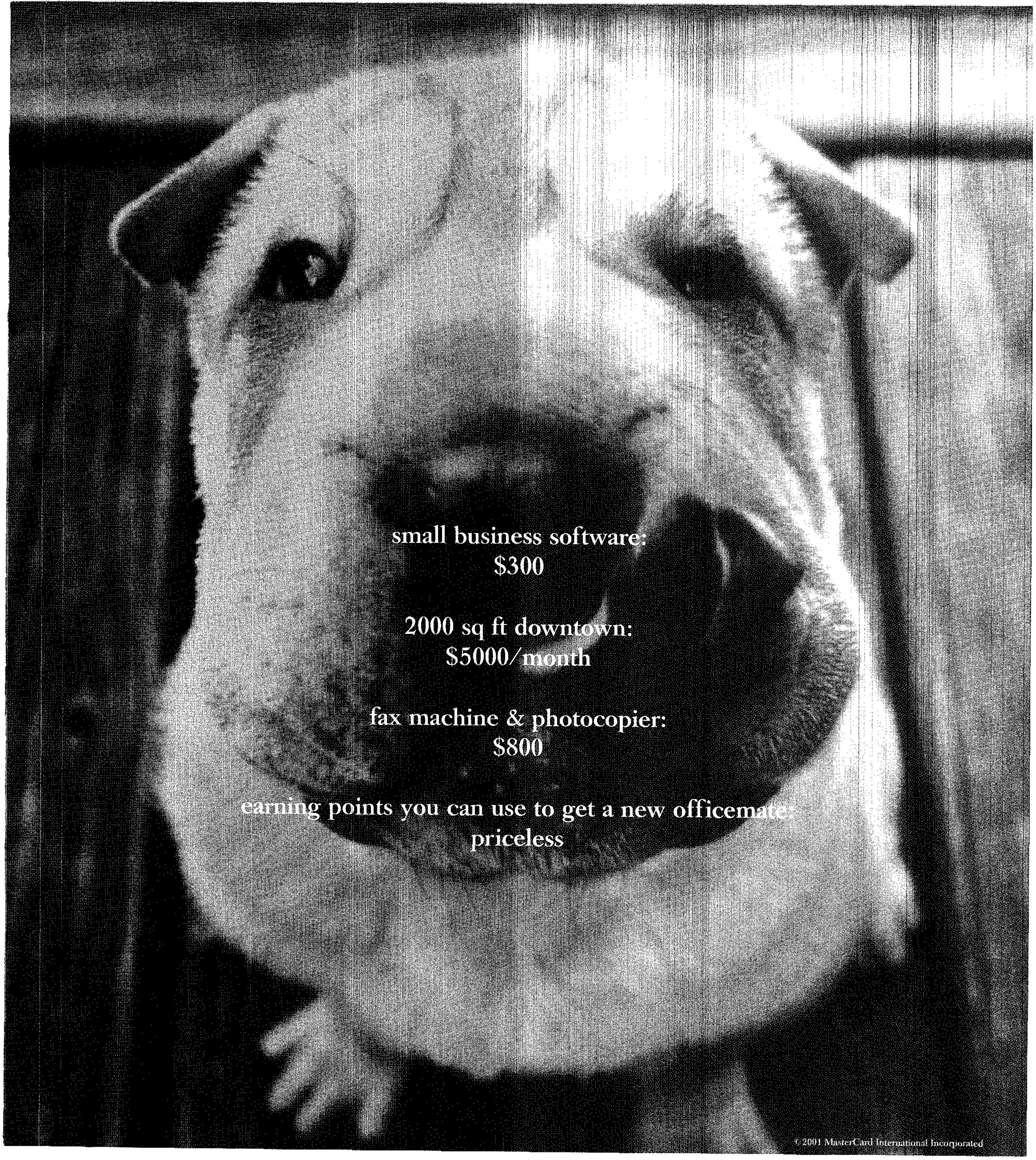
On Labor Day weekend, I saw the Ledges for the first time. Phil Markham and Joanne Ruppel and I had agreed to meet at one o'clock on Saturday afternoon, a day that proved to be less than ideal for swimming (overcast, sixty degrees, intermittent mist). I parked in an uncrowded cul-de-sac at the trailhead, and followed the trail until I came to a sandy shoreline area that fit a description Markham had given me over the phone. At first, I wasn't sure—the place was deserted—but then I spied several man-made rock structures (benches, walls, cairns) that he'd mentioned. I'd brought along an inflatable camping mattress and was making myself comfortable on a granite chaise longue that I would be happy to have in my living room, in an area that I'd gathered was the Temple of Friendship, when two other visitors, fellow middle-aged guys, arrived singly and found spots on the uppermost ledge. I didn't know that Markham's departure from Albany had been delayed because he was busy at his computer, dousing fires on a Ledges Web-site bulletin board, and I kept expecting him and Ruppel to show up at any minute.

At around two o'clock, a couple who looked to be in their late fifties appeared, carrying aluminum folding chairs. The man had a mustache and glasses and an ample belly. The woman was solidly built, with colossal breasts. Both wore slouch hats, loose-fitting shorts and tops, leather sneakers, and tube socks. No, they weren't Phil Markham and Joanne Ruppel; they were—this became apparent when the man got busy with a camera, taking shots of the rocks and the woods—tourists. After a few minutes, the man approached me with a slightly puzzled look, introduced himself (Tom Cooper, Elmendorf, Texas), and asked a question I'd anticipated: where were the naked people?

The Ledges, as of three days earlier, was no longer a nude beach, I explained. Then I filled him in on the recent historical developments: between the fall of 2001 and the summer of 2002, Margaret Frost and others managed to revive the debate. In early June, Frost again appeared before the Wilmington Selectboard—this time offering to share incriminating video evidence of nudists invading her space—which had agreed to reëxamine the issue. The topic of discussion was whether the self-policing effort had been effective. Frost obviously thought not, and her position was, paradoxically, strengthened by the unwillingness of USGen New England, which was wary of a discrimination lawsuit from naturists, to establish no-trespass boundaries. Another factor in Frost's favor was that, over the winter, there had been murmurings that someone wanted to open a topless bar in Wilmington. Never



"Today I'm announcing that I've decided to get out of my family so I can devote more time to politics."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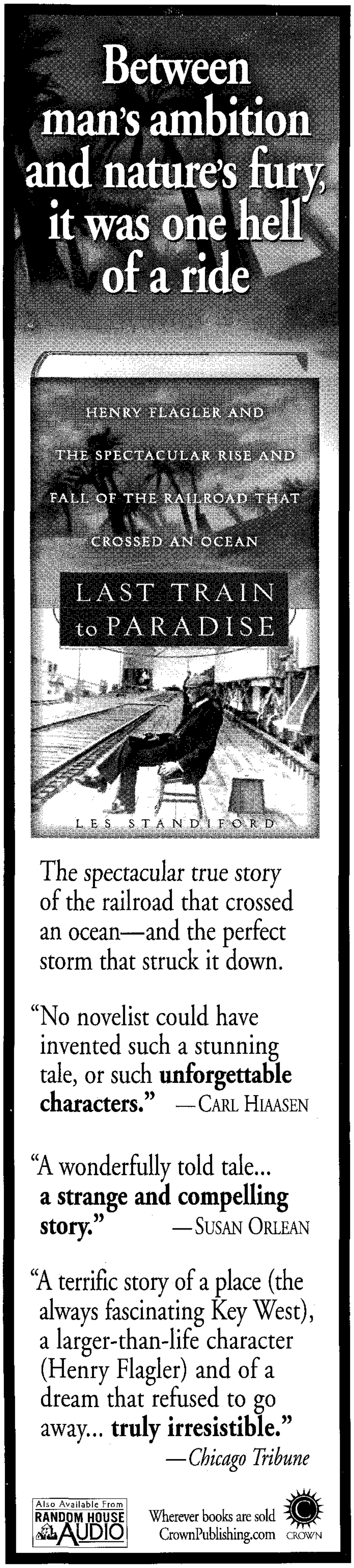

Between man's ambition and nature's fury, it was one hell of a ride

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mind that this was an extremely dubious business proposition in a town with a population of two thousand, too small even to entice a McDonald's; alarmists with hyperactive imaginations suddenly envisioned Wilmington teeming year-round with non-clothing-obsessed strangers. And the result? On June 12th, the Selectboard passed a law prohibiting public indecency (sexual intercourse, fondling genitals, etc.) and its no less evil twin, public nudity, which it defined as “the showing of the human male or female genitals, pubic area or buttocks with less than a full opaque covering, or the showing of the female breast with less than a fully opaque covering of any portion of the nipple, or the depiction of covered male genitals in a discernibly turgid state.” According to Vermont law, the ordinance could be challenged by a popular vote, provided the requisite signatures were secured within a statutory waiting period, and, on the Tuesday before Labor Day, the vote duly took place. The ordinance was upheld by a narrow margin (289–282), and the new law immediately became enforceable. This meant that, at the Ledges, Labor Day weekend—the unofficial end of summer—would possess, even more than usual, a valedictory, melancholy air. Though I welcomed the prospect of hanging out at a suddenly erstwhile nude beach and gawking at the novelty of the situation, Tom Cooper was dismayed.

He shook his head with a what's-the-world-coming-to weariness. Tom and his wife, Pat, were active, peripatetic members of the Naturist Society, the American Association for Nude Recreation, and an organization of not-necessarily-nudist recreational-vehicle owners called the Escapees RV Club. They'd been nudists for eight years and full-time RVers for two years, ever since they sold their home in New Jersey, bought a thirty-eight-foot diesel pusher, and established residency at a nudist RV park near San Antonio.

I asked Tom whether they were in the mood for some civil disobedience. “Am I prepared to flout the law?” he said, then arched his eyebrows. “Maybe if it were warmer.”

“It is a little cold today,” Pat said.

“We're nudists, we're not stupid,” Tom said.

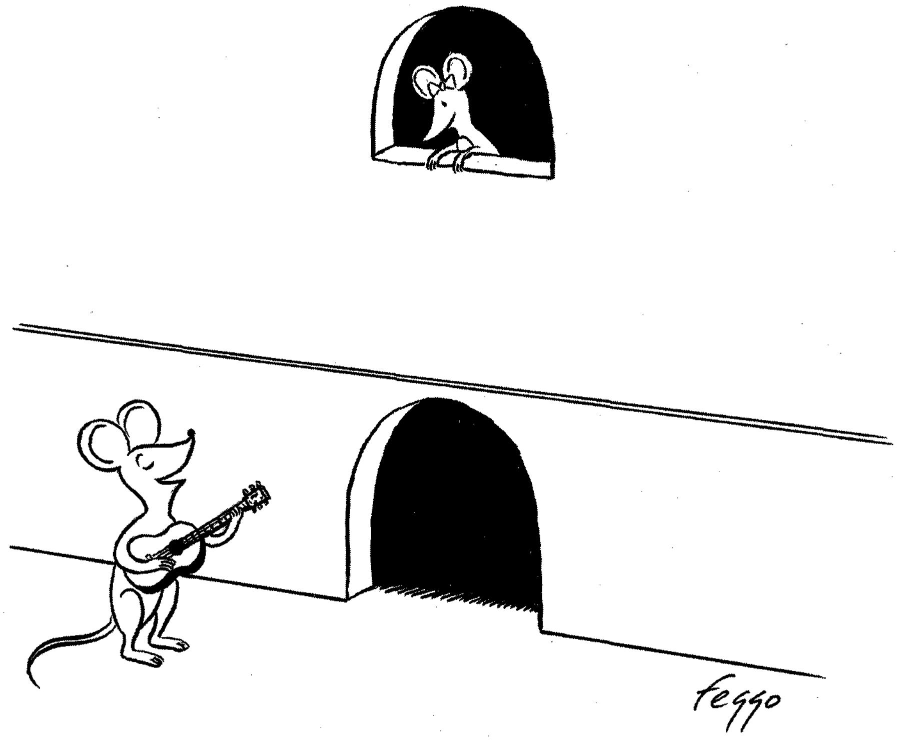
“But this is a nice place to come even if you're not nude,” Pat added.

Tom paused, plainly still troubled by my account of the new ordinance, then said, “Part of me says, ‘If this is a local issue, who am I to come in here and stir up everything?’ We're not travelling activists. But I'll tell you, we're seeing this same thing take place all over the country—down in New Jersey, for instance, at Higbee Beach. When they shut down Higbee, they said it was because they wanted to make it more of a ‘family place.’ A family place? The American Association for Nude Recreation is all about family—family unity, family nudity. That's our motto!”

We walked back to the parking lot, where we discovered that Phil Markham and Joanne Ruppel had arrived and, along with a small contingent of Friends of the Ledges, were preparing a cookout, a preliminary to a traditional end-of-summer gathering that was scheduled for the following afternoon. I introduced myself to Markham, and then introduced the Coopers. Markham, who seemed to be in something of a state, wasted no time before volunteering details of his recent tactical maneuvers, and segued into a dissection of the opposition's dirty tricks: “They took photographs of these condoms in the woods. But you could tell they hadn't been used, they'd been planted there, because they weren't weathered.” He was also suspicious of the topless-bar threat, which smelled like a red herring: “I could only allege that somebody paid somebody off to put that on the table.” Despite Markham's insistence that he was eager to arrive at a “win-win” solution with the town, he had recently sued Wilmington, and had posted on the Ledges Web site ad-hominem criticisms (“stupid,” “official bias and hatred”) of Selectboard members. He mentioned the lawsuit to Cooper, who nodded and said, “We're losing beaches all over the world, so—whatever it takes. Losing beaches is killing us. We lost Higbee, and now this one. This kills me.”

“This one isn't over yet,” Markham said.

The end-of-summer potluck picnic the next day was a six-hour affair, and as the sun (behind the clouds) was setting on it Joanne Ruppel asked me, “Have you ever been to a more de-



pressing party?" In fact, I'd had a fine time. About forty people showed up and made themselves comfortable on folding chairs or on the rearranged glacial rubble that is the permanent furniture of the Temple of Friendship. There was plenty to eat (grilled steaks, roasted corn, appetizers galore) and plenty to drink, and everyone seemed animated and friendly, if not exactly exuberant. The autumnal weather discouraged swimming, but one brave woman did skinny-dip—Ellen, from Massachusetts, who had come with her husband for an anniversary ritual. (They met at the Ledges during Labor Day weekend, in 1990—refuting one of Markham's pet theories, that the Ledges is "the worst place in the world to pick up chicks.")

Not counting the young father with a toddler and a five-year-old, or the preadolescent grandchildren of one couple from Rochester, the median age of the crowd was mid-forties to early fifties. Most were summer renters or second-home owners, and probably no more than a half dozen were registered to vote in Wilmington. The scuttlebutt at the Ledges that afternoon was that the ordinance was actually "about real estate and homophobia"—the real estate in question being a hundred-and-twenty-two-acre residential subdivision adjacent to the Ledges (and the Frost property). The developer, a local broker and builder named Brian Palmiter, had been selling lots ranging from ten to twenty acres, at an average price of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. When I met with Palmiter later in the week, I couldn't make up my mind about him, mainly because he presented two versions of himself. On the one hand, he pointed out that he'd already sold eight of ten parcels, the implication being that he wasn't terribly worried about his investment and didn't need to defend it. On the other hand, he had also paid for a cranky full-page ad in the *Deerfield Valley News*, which urged voters to combat "Flagrant Nudity! Lewd Behavior! Illegal Sexual Activities at the Ledges!" And he'd written letters to the editor, one of which concluded with a rant about the Ledges having become "a haven for largely out-of-state degenerates. . . . 'Stop the rape of the lake!' " (As it happened, Palmiter's customers were affluent out-of-staters who, though perhaps not certifiable degenerates, represented what other letter writers had in mind when they groused about real-estate development causing the property around Harriman Reservoir to become "Connecticuttized and Yorkeretted.")

The homophobia factor was a tricky

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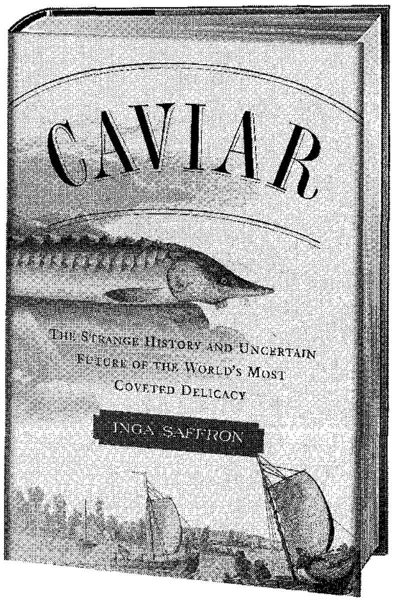
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proposition for all parties. Even those who were aligned with Friends of the Ledges didn't have a consistent position. After accusing the ordinance proponents of homophobia, straight Ledges users might, two sentences later, complain that the reckless behavior of promiscuous gays had spoiled the fun for everyone. During the picnic, I heard someone describe having once witnessed "heavy cocksucking" at the far end of the Ledges. (On my first walk to the Ledges, I saw, posted on several trees, flyers encouraging "like-minded guys" to gather in the "cruisy woods" near the Frost cottage. Within a couple of hours, the flyers had been removed.) The issue clearly troubled the Wilmington Selectboard, given that the interlopers who typically strayed closest to the Frost property and to Palmiter's development were gay. "Homosexual trysting" was the delicate term used during Selectboard proceedings to characterize whatever took place along the side trails that disappeared into the birches and maples.

For the people of Wilmington, the Ledges controversy has represented a distracting, unwelcome issue that they've felt compelled to take seriously. The exercise of democracy in Wilmington, as in most Vermont towns, is an earnest pursuit. The most recent annual town meeting—a hallowed institution, still worthy of Norman Rockwell—lasted eleven and a half hours. The focus of the discussion was how to cope with a state funding formula for schools which has made property taxes a frightening burden for many residents. Beneath Wilmington's postcard charms—when you take away the "country lodging" and "fine dining" and the boutiques selling scented candles, homemade fudge, and calico-lined baskets—it's a place where many people work at two jobs because that's what it takes to hold on to their homes. In such an atmosphere, a certain quotient of free-floating nativist backlash should come as no surprise.

The backlash has now been in progress for some time, dating to 2000, after the passage of Vermont's civil-union law, which generated a steady influx of gay pilgrims coming to get hitched. The reactionary response was a movement called Take Back Vermont. Around Wilmington, the person most closely identified with Take Back Vermont was perhaps Donald Towne, an archconservative moral crusader. Predictably, Towne seized upon the Ledges dispute as an opportunity to launch a fresh volley of letters to the editor. (His pièce de résistance managed to connect nudity at the Ledges to child kidnappings and to Palestinians dancing in the streets after the September 11th attacks.)

In November, Wilmington's voters will get yet another chance to rethink the ordinance. (The law allows for a new petition campaign and a new vote. Lucky Wilmington!) The prevailing wisdom is that Markham has overplayed his hand, and, unless the right wing blunders by making excessive pre-election noise, it seems the vote may not be quite as close this time around. Fred Skwirut, the chair of the Selectboard, summed up the anti-carpetbagger sentiment when he said, "We don't need to be told that Vermonters love their freedom." Even Joanne Ruppel, Markham's breadwinning mate, has—rather nakedly—posted musings on the Web-site bulletin board which alternate between defensiveness and contrition. "Many, many, many times we have discussed just dropping this whole issue," she wrote recently. "At this point, I wish we had never gotten involved."

Perhaps anticipating another defeat, Markham seems to be gazing toward a more distant horizon. During a phone conversation the other day, he told me, "I've been doing some Web-site research on the phrase 'turgid state'—you know, that language from the ordinance. You just type in that key phrase and see what happens. All sorts of Web sites come up. You can see how this thing has spread across the country, and the problems it's caused in other towns. There's an outfit called the American Family Association behind a lot of it. And I'm really shocked that such a right-wing thing has made its way to Vermont. People think this indecency-ordinance thing started here, but it's going on in Mississippi, Tennessee, all over the place. You should try it yourself. Go ahead: 'turgid state.' "

Meanwhile, there's a new bumper sticker visible on the roads in the land of live-and-let-live. It says, "Take Back Vermont. Again." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

THE DUEL

BY JESSE LICHTENSTEIN

> An Iraqi vice president offered an unusual suggestion Thursday for solving the U.S.-Iraq standoff: Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush should fight a duel to settle their differences and spare their people the ravages of war.
>
> —*Associated Press.*

Dear Mr Saddam Hussein,

By your Distempers and want of those Decent Principles by which have all Men liv’d peaceably, by your Baseness and notorious Felonies, your Threats and Vile Expressions, you have much offended one who give no Cause for Offence. Therefore it leave to me no Choice save that I request a Gentleman’s Satisfaction, and do hereby await your Reply.

I am, Sir, your most humble, etc.,
George W. Bush

Dear Bush,

Salutations! This be indeed a Surprise most pleasing—much time has pass’d. I trust this Missive finds you well mend’d from the Frightfull Fall upon your Cheek. Were it not you I recently espy’d on CNN, so flush’d and Healthfull? I pray you bestow my Fond Regardes upon Richard Cheney, and also the goodly cast of “Friends,” in most particular Rachel, with Felicitations upon the Birth of a Girl Childe.

I remain your humble servant, etc.,
Saddam

Dear Mr Hussein,

It seems you had mistook my Meaning, else do deliberately pervert it. Your Pleasantries and Flattery shall not preserve you in this most Grave Matter, nor shall your seditious Moustaches, for the Hour of Preens and Chatterings is pass’d. You, Sir, are a Plaguey detractor and your Presence a Pestilence upon the Common Peace. I must have Satisfaction. Name the Place and Conditions of your Attendance there. It be prov’d unto the World you be a Prevaricator; shew yourself not to be a Coward as well.

I am, Sir, your most humble, etc. etc.,
George W. Bush

Dear Bush,

I curse you. May you be trampl’d by Swines. May the Oil you unstintingly Obtain from me be of Inferior Quality. May your Ears grow by Night and your Nose by Day, you leprous Swag.

There. Indeed that was most Refreshing. The exchange of wilde Oaths and Invecktives were always a favourite Pass-time for me, even as a Childe.

I shou’d delight of a Meeting. I have oft heard tell of your Country Estates, which, if I be not in Error, inhere within the Texas country. This I do propose as mete for Conference. Be Texas not a Land of great Chattel and nubile Maidens? Are there not hang’d and Injection’d Criminals of most debas’d Nature? Further, your man Cheney avows that your Grounds be equipp’d with Hot Tub. If this be Truth, I shall assuredly convey with me the apposite batheing Attire.

I am your devoted, servile, etc. etc.,
Saddam

Dear Mr Hussein,

Scoundrel! You will not by mine nor any other Permission befoul, besmirch, nor be-sully the Land of Texas with your Odious Presence. Kno’ you nothing of the Code of Honour? The Grounds need must be neutral! You be the challenged Party, and Selection make. Look you do so without further Delay.

I am, Sir, your most humble, etc. etc.,
George W. Bush

Dear Old Bush,

You Filth-Pot. You Scurvy Dog. You Slop-Monger. (This be Entertainment!)

Very well, I accede to your Importunities. I will not have it say’d I forc’d you to Face your Destiny discomfit’d by the Grounds. Hark, then, for either Disney World or Biarritz shall do—I have heard that both be lovely this Time of Year.

I am, and remain, with Admiration, etc. etc., at your Bidding,
Saddam

Dear Mr Hussein,

This selection of Location has prov’d Disastrous beyond all Sense and Reason. I think I shall be forc’d to track you like a Craven Animal into your Lair! At leaste have the Decency to make choice of Weapon. Have you a shred of Honour left to expend in this Meeting?

I am, Sir, your most humble, etc.,
George W. Bush

Dear Bush,

Verily, you are in the right. Let us settle the Matter, then: I hereby select a Weapon of mass Destruction. Two, perhaps, were better, lest one Misfire. Yet, and this it paines me to Reveal, my Armory be somewhat reduc’d. Might I not trouble you for a Loan?

I remain prostrate, self-mortifying, in terrible Awe, etc.,
Saddam

Dear Mr Hussein,

Good God, Man, can truly this great Mockery transpire in our enlighten’d Age? You shall employ Conventional weaponry, to be Inspect’d and prepar’d by our Seconds, avowing the Probity of these Actions. This be not Discretional! Justice shall be done, Honour shall be restor’d, and you shall Fall, you Murtherer, you shamefull, Cankerous Blight.

I am, Sir, most humbly yours, etc.,
George W. Bush

Dear Bush,

Cankerous Blight! That were a splendid Frase—I shall have it fram’d.

Lamentably, it be not possible that I concur with such Inspections as you proffer. You have my assurances that all my Armaments be in Working Order and of great Readiness, for they are amongst the finest know’d to the World, amongst which they be of Russian, Chinese, and American Fabrication. Allow me to Demonstrate by Means of an Assay upon my own Countrymen—my Friends the Kurdes are ever Eager to volunteer, and I have found this to be an effective Proof. If it suffices not, volunteer your own Expendables and we shall make a Demonstration thereupon. Thus you shall have your Satisfaction.

I remain assuredly in your Thrall, and humbly do submit this Reply, etc.,
Saddam ◆

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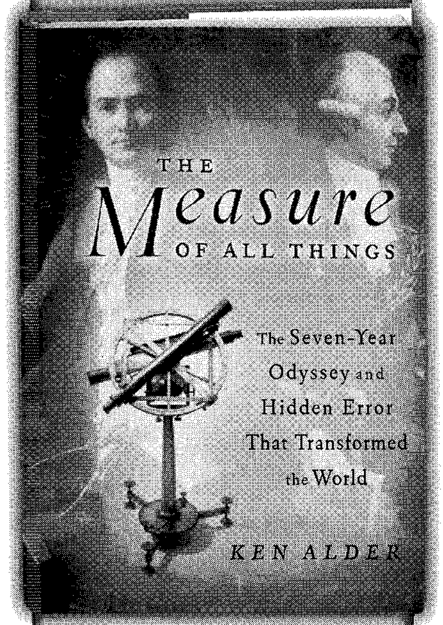
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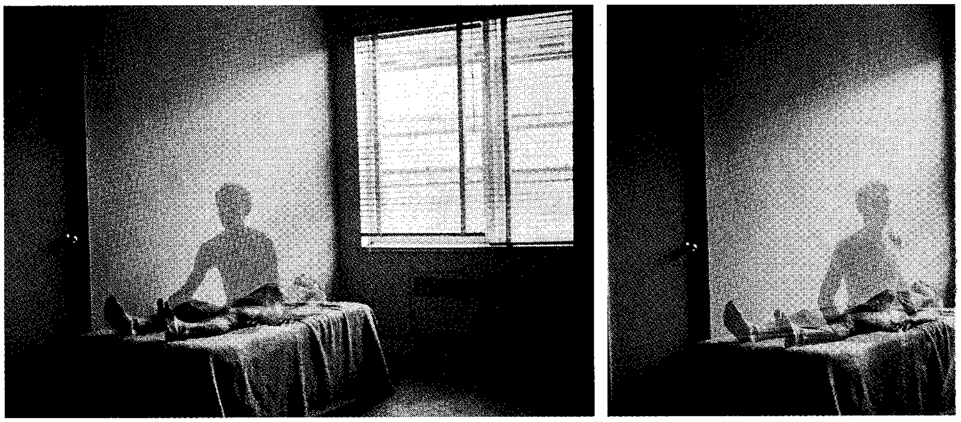
ANNALS OF MEDICINE

DYING WORDS

How should doctors deliver bad news?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN



Not long ago, I had an appointment with a patient who was likely to die within a year and a half. Maxine Barlow was a twenty-eight-year-old teacher in Boston. The only child of a middle-class family, she had recently become engaged to a financial analyst, Peter Wayland (all names have been changed). One morning in the shower, Maxine found a small lump in her breast, a little larger than a pea. A biopsy showed that it was breast cancer. Further tests revealed that the cancer had spread to Maxine's spine and liver, which meant that surgery could not fully remove it, and Maxine's surgeon referred her to me for chemotherapy.

Maxine and I met on a brisk autumn afternoon. Her appointment was my last of the day, since our conversation was likely to extend beyond the hour usually allotted to new patients. I had to explain the gravity of her condition and the possible choices she could make.

After I had examined Maxine, we were joined in my office by her parents and by Peter. They sat in a semicircle facing me, with Maxine between them. I moved my chair out from behind my desk.

"Let's review what was found at surgery," I began. Maxine reached for Peter's hand. Although I addressed Maxine, I also briefly met the gaze of her parents and of Peter, in order to engage everyone. "The cancer in the breast measured one and a half centimetres, about half an inch, and under the microscope the cancer cells were actively dividing," I said. "They should be treated aggressively. The tests we did on the tumor showed that it is not sensitive to hormones"—which ruled out Tamoxifen, a common hormone-blocker. "The scan showed that several deposits of tumor had spread from the breast to the bones in the neck. There also are four deposits in the liver. We can treat them with chemotherapy, which destroys the cancer cells wherever they might be lurking. The good news is that you stand a very strong chance of going into remission."

"So that means that she'll be O.K.?" Maxine's mother asked.

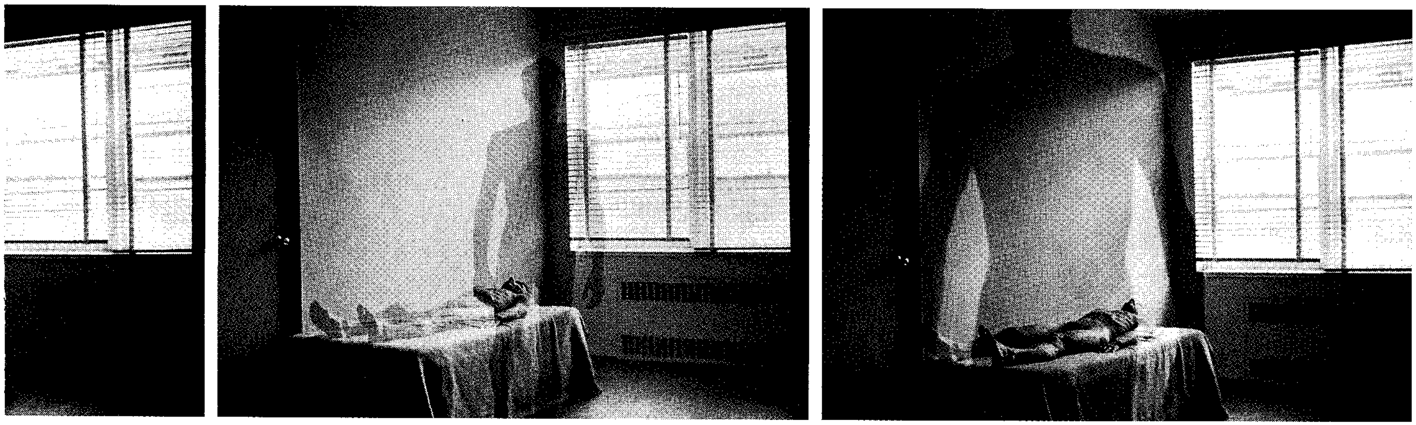
My stomach tightened in a familiar way. This part never got any easier.

"Remission does not mean cure," I said. "Remission means that all the cancer we can measure disappears. Therapy is palliative."

"What do you mean, 'palliative'?" Peter asked in a panicked voice.

"She has to be cured," Maxine's father said.

This distinction was important, and I needed to make sure, gently but unequivocally, that they understood. "There is a very good chance that we will see the metastatic deposits in your bones and liver shrink significantly, or completely



DUANE MICHALS, "THE SPIRIT LEAVES THE BODY"/ PACE/MACGILL GALLERY

melt away. But the most intensive chemotherapy or radiation available—even bone-marrow transplant—is not enough to destroy every cancer cell in your body. That is why, currently, we cannot say the cancer can be cured."

Maxine sat without speaking. Her eyes filled with tears, and I gave her some tissues.

"What is the point of treatment, then?" I asked. "Palliation. That means that even if the cancer cannot be cured it can be controlled. The best-case scenario is that the cancer becomes like a parasite," I said, purposefully invoking a stark image. "We knock it down with the therapy, and hope that it stays down for many, many months or years. You can live an active life—work, jog, travel, whatever. The bones and liver can heal. And when the cancer returns we work to knock it down again. All the while, we hold on to the hope that an experimental treatment will be found that is able to eradicate the cancer—to truly cure you."

Like Maxine, Mrs. Barlow was fighting back tears. Her husband stared at me. I paused before broaching a second critical issue.

"We talked about the best-case scenario. But we also have to acknowledge that there is a worst-case scenario."

I had found that this part of the discussion was best completed rapidly, as if removing an adhesive bandage.

"The worst-case scenario is that ultimately the cancer becomes resistant to all the treatments we have, and even experimental therapies are no use. Most people say that if they reach a point in the illness when their brain is impaired, and there is no likelihood of improving their quality of life, then nothing should be done to keep them artificially alive, through machines like respirators. It's essential, Maxine, that I know what you want done if we reach that point."

"I—I don't think I would want that," she said, haltingly.

"You mean that you would want only comfort measures to alleviate pain, and nothing done to prolong your life, like a respirator or cardiac resuscitation?"

"Yes, I think so," Maxine whispered.

I nodded. This was her "end-of-life directive." I would put it in writing in her medical chart.

"We have a plan of therapy and an understanding. Now let's look on the positive side," I said, trying to spark some of the determination she would need in order to endure the months of chemotherapy ahead. "You are young, your organ function is excellent—despite the deposits of tumor, your liver is still working well, and your blood counts are fine—so there is every reason to think that you will tolerate the drugs and we will make real progress."

I smiled confidently. Maxine struggled to do the same.

"But what are the exact odds for a remission?" Peter Wayland asked. "I mean, how many patients like Maxie stay in remission and for how long, on average?"

Maxine looked at him sharply. "Dr. Groopman said that there is every reason to think I'll go into remission," she said. "What more do we need to know now?"

She turned to me, her face full of uncertainty.

This was a crucial moment in our interview. There were several ways that I could answer Peter's question. I could give the bald statistics—that more than fifty per cent of people with cancer like Maxine's die within two years—or I could put it more gently, and say that she had a chance, if a low one, of surviving for more than two years. I could even say, somewhat vaguely, that she was young and strong and had as good a chance as anyone of surviving, on the principle that she would benefit more from encouragement than from statistics. As I looked at Maxine, I sensed that she preferred neither the extreme of ignorance nor the extreme of excruciating detail but some middle ground.

"Statistics don't say anything about any particular individual, only about groups," I said. "There can be wide variability in the behavior of any cancer in each person, because each of us is different—different genetically, living in a different environment—and we metabolize the treatments differently.

"I want my patients to be informed," I said, looking now at Peter. "When Maxine said she understood there is a very good chance of remission, that is accurate. It could last months or it could last years. Putting precise numbers on it at this point doesn't really tell us anything more about Maxine. In the meantime, we need to plan for the best while acknowledging the worst."

Oncologists give bad news to patients some thirty-five times per month on average, telling a patient that he has cancer, that his tumor has come back, that his treatment has failed, that no further treatment would be helpful. And yet there is no agreement among specialists about how to deliver such news. More than forty per cent of oncologists withhold a prognosis from a patient if he or she does not ask for it or if the family requests that the patient not be told. A similar number speak in euphemisms, skirting the truth. Today, in most of Eu-

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THE BITCH IN THE HOUSE

26 WOMEN TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT SEX, SOLITUDE, WORK, MOTHERHOOD, AND MARRIAGE

• Hope Edelman • Pam Houston • Ellen Gilchrist • Natalie Angier • Daphne Merkin • Chitra Divakaruni • Elissa Schappell • Helen Schulman • Vivian Gornick • Kate Christensen • Karen Karbo • And Fifteen Other Original Pieces

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rope doctors often do not tell patients that they are dying.

Until recently, many doctors rarely informed their patients that there was nothing to be done for them; conventional wisdom had it that patients ought to be spared the anguish of knowing that they were going to die. The renowned physician Sir William Osler, who, at the turn of the last century, wrote the seminal textbook "The Principles and Practice of Medicine," emphasized the importance of keeping the patient optimistic. "It wasn't the style to be specific," Dr. David Golde, a former physician-in-chief at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, said of his medical training, which began in 1962. "The patient's questions and the doctor's answers—both avoided detail. And doctors never volunteered to give more information. Of course, there were no formalized end-of-life directives. The doctor's duty to ease the path was unspoken." When I asked him what he meant by not being specific, he said, "The doctor would say, 'Yes, you have a serious disease.' "

In 1969, a book called "On Death and Dying," by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, which later became a best-seller, made death an acceptable subject for discussion between patients and doctors for the first time. In the nineteen-eighties, cultural and political changes in America—some precipitated by AIDS—introduced the notion that a patient had a right to know everything his doctor knew. In 1993, Sherwin Nuland's book "How We Die," which won the National Book Award, described in detail the psychology and physiology of death.

As medical practice grows more sophisticated more people are living longer with the knowledge that they may be dying. Decisions made in the late stages of illness are increasingly an aspect of treatment. Dying requires emotional and physical stamina from the individual and his family. And the difficulty of negotiating all this has an effect on doctors as well as patients. A recent article reported that more than half of the oncologists interviewed say that the frequent witnessing of death leads to an overwhelming sense of fatigue and futility; the profession has one of the highest burnout rates in medicine.

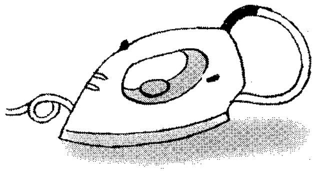
Despite this, during my nine years of medical school and professional training in the nineteen-seventies, I was never instructed in how to speak about dying to a gravely ill patient and the patient's family. It was presumed that, as medical students, we learned how to deliver bad news through careful observation of our mentors, just as we learned how to lance a deep abscess by watching doctors and then trying it ourselves. But most physicians preferred to speak to their patients in private. And the subject was never raised in our classrooms.

As an oncology fellow, I began my career believing that it was essential to provide details to my patients. Sharing statistics seemed like the obvious thing to do: surely a patient should have access to everything I knew. Early on, I had a case somewhat similar to Maxine's. Claire Allen was a small, straw-haired librarian in her forties with breast cancer; she was married, with two young children. Like Maxine, she had multiple metastases to bone and liver. We met in my clinic office, and she looked at me expectantly.

"Claire, with this disease, a remission would ordinarily last three to six months," I told her bluntly. "A person could expect to survive between one to two years."

She appeared to take the news stalwartly, but I later learned from her husband that she had left the appointment deeply shaken. She told her children that she had only one Christmas left. Her face was full of despair whenever I saw her. And yet Claire lived for nearly four years. She was able to travel, work part time, and take care of her children, but was unable to stop thinking that she could die at any moment.

Chastened, I tried a different approach. Henry Gold, a short-order cook in his sixties, had acute leukemia that had resisted all treatment. At one point, he asked me what else could be done. I reassured him that there were drugs that had not yet been tried, even though I knew they were unlikely to help. When Henry started to bleed around his lungs, I had the interns drain the hemorrhage with chest tubes; I insisted that he be intubated, supported on a respirator in



the I.C.U., and given numerous blood transfusions. His heart developed a dangerous arrhythmia, so I gave orders for cardiac medications and electroshock. I never asked Henry what he wanted. He stayed alive for more than a week on the respirator, a catheter in his heart, tubes in his throat, unable to speak to family and friends who had come to his bedside.

On a chilly morning two days after our first meeting, Maxine returned to the clinic for her first round of chemotherapy. She had insisted on coming alone; Peter would pick her up afterward. The chemotherapy suite is a large, open space that holds twenty or so patients receiving intravenous drugs, some behind curtains, others talking or watching television. Maxine looked at the patients she passed. Most were wearing hats or kerchiefs to cover their bald heads. Several reclined in their chairs, thin and pale, too weak to sit up. It was clear that some of them would soon die.

A half hour after Maxine's chemotherapy treatment, Peter still had not arrived. Maxine's cell phone rang. "He's tied up," she explained to me, and we arranged for a car service to take her home. When I called Maxine later that evening to see how she was doing, Peter answered the phone and told me that she was sleeping.

"She's going to die, isn't she?" he said. He explained that he had been searching the Internet, and had read that in cases like Maxine's patients survived on average eighteen months, and that a remission lasted three to six months at best.

"Peter, as I said when we met, statistics don't tell you what is going to happen to any one person, just groups."

I got off the phone as quickly as I could. There could be no "back channel" discussions with friends or family; if Maxine had wanted to, she could have logged on to the Internet.

Over the next seven months, the metastases in Maxine's bones and in her liver decreased significantly. Although she was frequently tired and lost her hair, she was able to work part time, and even took a weekend trip to Manhattan with her parents and went to Newport for a friend's wedding. Then, on a routine visit at the end of May, after her eighth month of therapy, I noticed that one of her eyes wandered, and she seemed to be tilting her head to the right.

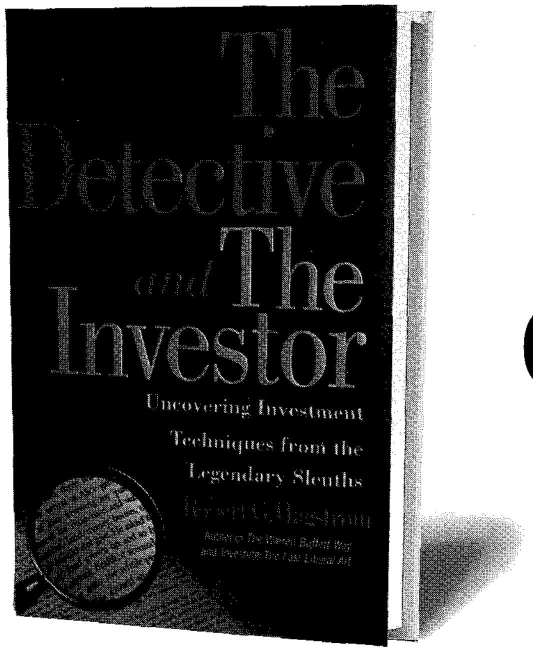
"Are you having any trouble seeing?"

She said that sometimes it was difficult to read.

"Any double vision?"

Yes, she said, on a few occasions that week, when she was walking down stairs.

Movement of the eyes is controlled by a set of cranial nerves at the base of the skull. An initial MRI scan of the brain did not turn up anything abnormal, but scans do not always detect small deposits on the cranial nerves. I explained that a spinal tap was the best way to determine if the cancer had spread to the brain; it would allow us to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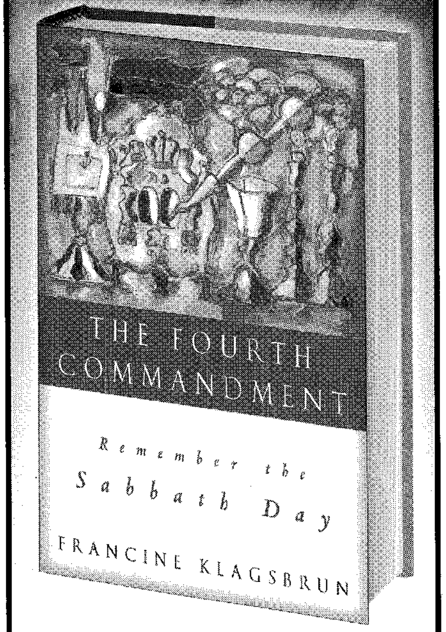

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Francine Klagsbrun, a columnist for *The Jewish Week* and *Moment* magazine, draws on the Bible, Talmud, and Kabbalah, as well as commentaries and legends, to explore the rich history, true origin, and timeless purpose of this cornerstone of Jewish life.

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search for tumor cells in the spinal fluid.

Maxine lay on her side as a medical resident performed the procedure. I tried to distract her. We talked about the Red Sox, who had started the season strong, and whether, as usual, they would end up losing games in the homestretch. After sterilizing and anesthetizing the area between the fourth and fifth lumbar vertebrae, the resident passed a fine trocar into the spinal canal. Maxine twitched. Drops of fluid fell from the trocar into a test tube that he held under it. Normal spinal fluid is clear; Maxine's was cloudy.

"It's over," I said. "Stay down for an hour, so you don't get a headache."

She asked what it meant if the cancer had gone to her cranial nerves.

I was almost certain, based on the cloudiness of the spinal fluid, that this was the case. How much did Maxine want to know?

"It is a major setback," I said.

"I'm not sure I want to ask how long a remission lasts if the cancer is in my brain," she said.

"Are you sure you want to talk about this now?"

Maxine closed her eyes and nodded.

"People usually live several weeks to a few months without any treatment," I said. "But that represents the average. There are people who live longer. Treatment with radiation and chemotherapy instilled into the spinal fluid may or may not extend life, but it can reduce some of the most annoying complications, like the double vision."

Maxine was silent. "Is it even worth being treated?" she finally asked.

"You are the only one who can answer that question," I said. "If we don't treat it, it will quickly spread to other cranial nerves and parts of the brain and spinal cord. The quality of your life would be markedly impaired. I want to help sustain as much quality of life for as long as possible."

Maxine opened her eyes.

"I don't want to die," she said, beginning to sob. "I didn't think it would happen so fast, so soon. I'm not ready to die."

"I don't want to lose you," I said. There was nothing more I could say now that would help. "Let's go step by step, and talk after the results from the spinal tap."

Later that day, I went to the pathology laboratory. Under the microscope, numerous large cells, with distorted nuclei, filled what should have been an empty field. "Carcinoma," the pathologist said.

Over the next few weeks, we began radiation treatment and a new round of chemotherapy, infused into her spinal fluid. At first, Maxine's double vision improved. But after three weeks or so she found that she couldn't move her left eye, and we put a patch over it. Shortly thereafter, the left side of her face began to droop. A second MRI showed that the cancer had spread to the membranes lining the cerebral cortex and spinal cord. It was evening when I came into Maxine's hospital room. She was watching television.

She turned to me as I switched off the TV.

"Peter left me."

I nodded, saying that I had noticed that he was not around the past few days.

"He's been seeing someone else the past three months."

I remained silent.

"I always felt, deep inside, that he was weak." Maxine paused. "No, not just weak. He's a schmuck. A real schmuck."

"Do you know what that word literally means in Yiddish?" I asked.

Maxine laughed.

I took her hand. She tried to press back, but had little force. The nerves from the cervical spinal cord were being compressed by the deposits of cancer.

"I'm not sure how much strength I have left," Maxine said. She was in a fragile condition. It was time to assess clinical issues.

"Remember once I asked you what your wishes were if we reached a point when further therapy would not improve the quality of your life?"

Maxine nodded. "So you think it's just a few days?" she asked. Her voice was hollow.

"Probably more than just a few days," I said. "Probably weeks. Or maybe longer—I've been wrong before."

"And really nothing can be done?"

Like all patients, Maxine was finding it almost impossible to give up hope.

"Nothing that I know of," I said. "And to continue to give you chemotherapy would not improve the time we have left. But anything I can do to make the time that we have left good for you, I'll do."

Maxine turned away. "How do I actually die from the cancer?"

"You lose consciousness, go into a coma, and either you stop breathing or your heart stops. But you're not aware of any of it."

She was silent as I sat holding her hand.

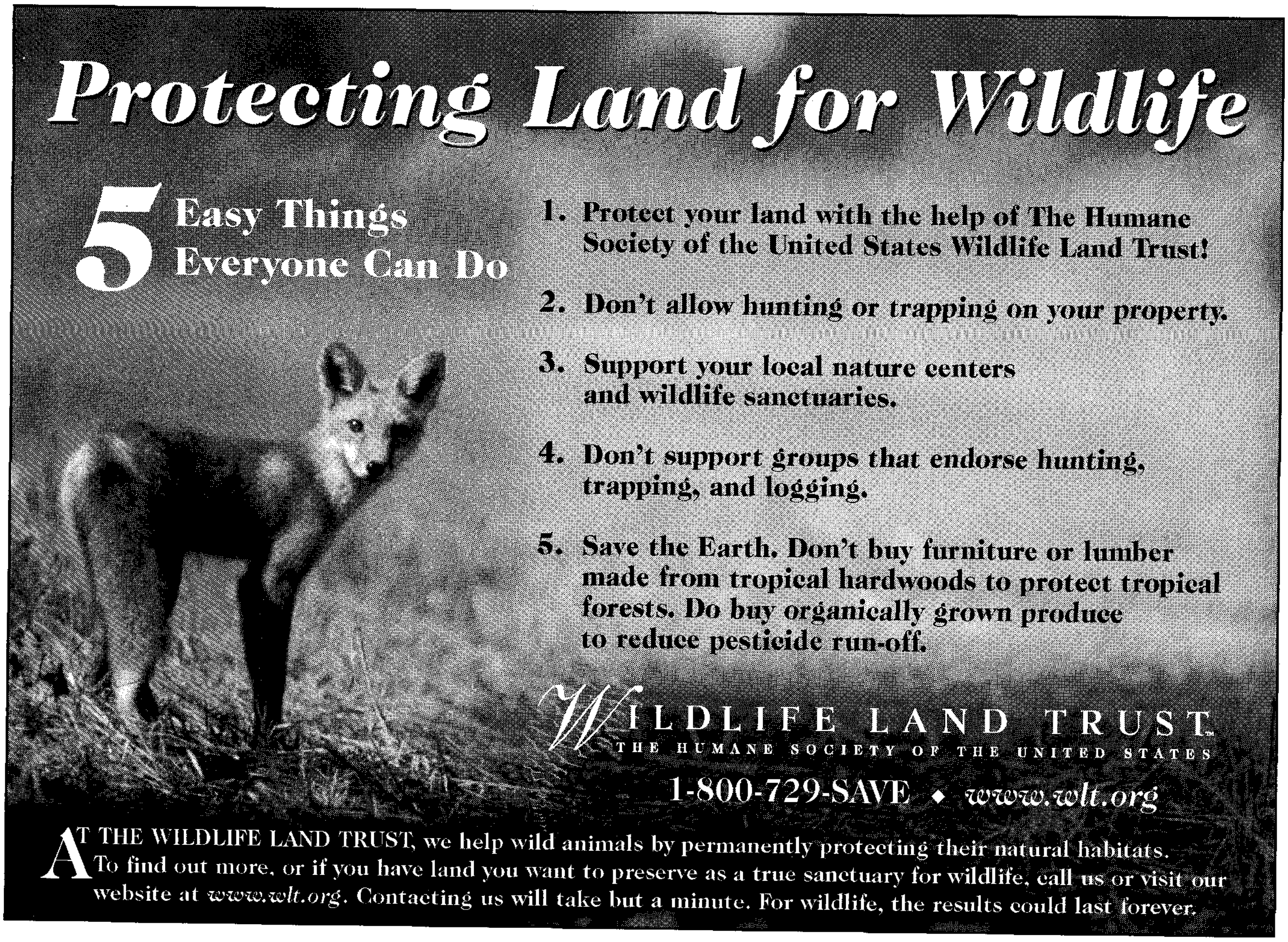
The first time I witnessed death was in my second year of medical school. My father had had a massive, unexpected heart attack, and I went to meet my mother at the hospital in Queens. The sheets were drenched with sweat. His eyes were filmy and repeatedly rolled upward. Coarse, grunting noises punctuated his breathing, and his chest heaved. His limbs jerked wildly. This went on for nearly half an hour, as a large clock on the wall ticked off the minutes. Then, after a last convulsion, a pink foam poured from his mouth, his head snapped back, the little color remaining in his skin drained away, and he was still.

I held my mother, numb with disbelief. The doctor on call, whom we did not know and who had stood by as we watched, closed the curtain around the bed. He looked at me holding my mother, and said weakly, "It's tough, kid."

Although I later learned that the flailing movements of my father's limbs were the result of neurological reflexes, and that he had not been conscious, I could not stop wondering if he had suffered. The ugliness of these final minutes often invades otherwise comforting memories of times we spent together. When I became a physician, I vowed that I would do everything I could to temper such gruesome experiences for the patient and for the family.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, death was supposed to be met with words of welcome. This was the core of *ars moriendi*—"the art of dying." The "art" prepared and purified the person by linking his experience to Jesus' death on the Cross. Treatises like William Caxton's, printed in 1491, instructed laymen to think about the end of life, even when they were healthy, and dictated what words they should expect to hear and say when death was near: "This time of your departing shall be better to you than the time of your birth, for now all sickness, sorrow, and trouble shall depart from you forever. Therefore be not aggrieved with your sickness and take it not with grutching but take it rather all by gladness."

Today, the physician frequently finds himself assuming a role that was once the exclusive province of religious authorities. Yet the palliative care he offers is primarily meant to ease physical suffering; he is not trained to alleviate emotional pain. In medical terms, a "good death" is a death with the least physical suffering possible. As *ars moriendi* suggests, though, there is a historical notion of a "good death" that is more complicated; it is as much about a cultivated



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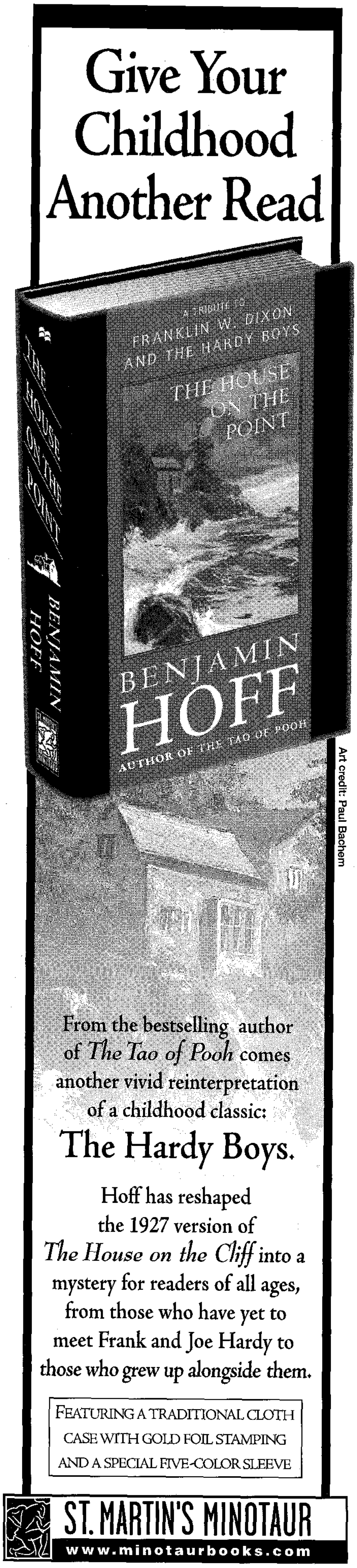

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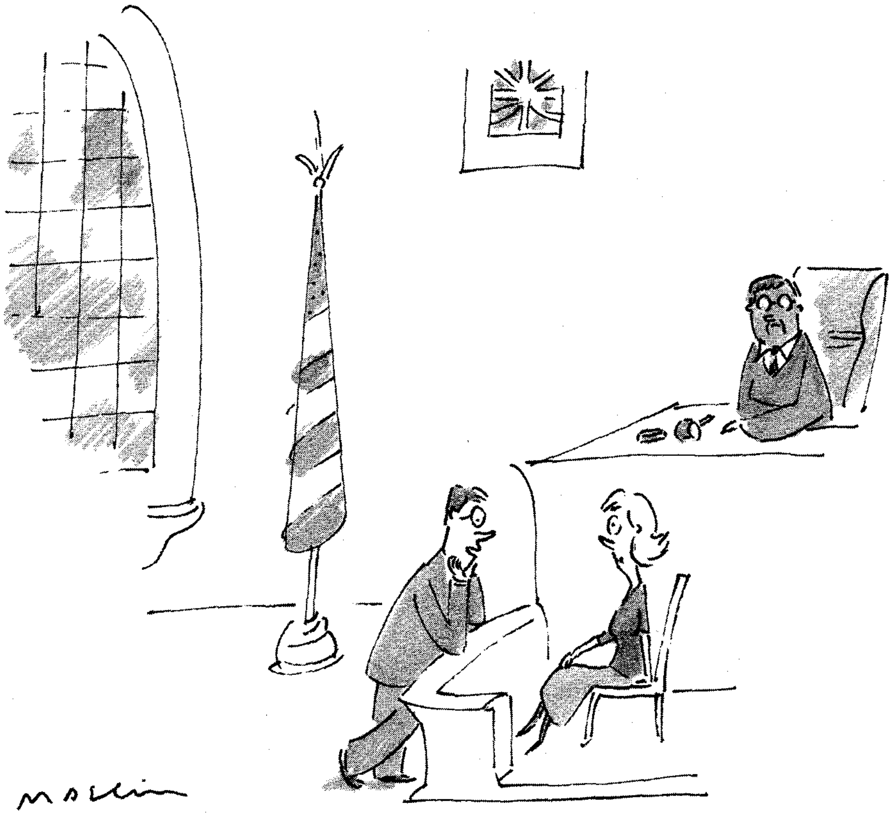
attitude toward leaving life as it is about the physical act. Is there more, then, that physicians should do to make dying in a hospital after illness less emotionally taxing?

Last January, one of the first academic studies of how effectively oncologists communicate critical information to their patients was published. A hundred and eighteen patients cared for by nine oncologists participated in the research. The doctor-patient interactions were recorded on audiotape. The study tried to determine two things: whether the information disclosed to the patients was sufficient for them to make an informed decision about further treatment, and whether the doctor encouraged the patient's participation in choosing among treatments.

Although the oncologists knew that they were being taped, in more than a quarter of the consultations the patients were not told that their disease was incurable; a similar percentage were not informed of the side effects associated with the proposed anti-cancer therapy. Only five patients of the hundred and eighteen—some four per cent—received what the researchers considered adequate information. In nearly ninety per cent of the taped discussions, the oncologists failed to ask the patients if they understood the information being presented to them. These results are in keeping with prior research indicating that more than a third of patients with incurable metastatic cancer believe that the treatment offered by their doctors will actually cure them.

Suffering is not the only cost. Many in the medical profession have speculated that doctors' uncertainty in guiding patients through the end of life is one of the primary causes of rising health-care costs. More money is spent on care during the last weeks of life than on the months or years of care that precede it. The kinds of interventions that are routine in an intensive-care unit—pumps to sustain circulation, respirators to ventilate the lungs—cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Some physicians don't want to acknowledge that a patient is going to die, and regularly order tests and procedures at a point when no reasonable gain can come of them. Studies show that a doctor does not shorten the life of the patient when he chooses



"What is it about you that makes the federal government want to prosecute you to the fullest extent of the law?"

to provide palliative rather than intensive care.

All of this is reason to change the profession's approach to end-of-life care. But change has been slow in coming. "There is every institutional barrier to palliative care," Dr. Kathleen Foley, a neuro-oncologist at Sloan-Kettering, told me. "Traditionally, oncologists are paid to give chemotherapy, not to have long conversations. In the early nineteen-nineties, a review by the American Board of Internal Medicine of training of medical residents concluded that there was a very low level of competency in dealing with these issues. And yet the National Cancer Institute has been unresponsive to the issue of palliative care. Although sixty per cent of Americans who have cancer will die from it, the National Cancer Institute allocates only one per cent of its budget for research and training in palliative care. It's not welcome to talk about dying."

Dr. Diane Meier, the director of the Center to Advance Palliative Care at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in New York, which is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has been working to institutionalize palliative care for nearly a decade. When I called her in her office, she told me that there are currently seven studies showing that palliative care saves money. "It's always been the right thing to do, of course," she said, referring to the integration of palliative care into treatment.

But it was only after her foundation and others demonstrated that palliative care saves money that hospitals and insurance companies began to institutionalize such policies. According to Meier, even today what happens to people at the end of life has less to do with their wishes than with the available resources of the particular hospital and how health care is funded in this country. Many hospitals don't have palliative-care programs, for example, and so patients are often kept in an acute-care setting until the end of their lives.

The motivation to change medical practice is finally in place. Is there actually a "best approach" to telling a patient that the end of her life is near? In March, *The Journal of Clinical Oncology* published several scenarios illustrating how a doctor might handle such a situation. The article makes it clear that, until now, the medical profession, which is built on the notion of improving and refining its practices, has been painfully inept in its efforts to improve palliative care. The scenarios were based on a case similar to Maxine's. A woman treated for breast cancer that had spread to bone and liver now had regrowth of the cancer. She was married, with two young children, and her medical record did not contain an end-of-life directive.

SCENARIO ONE:

MD (*with unusual somberness*): Mrs. M, I don't think there is anything more we can do for you. I think it's time for hospice.

MRS. M (*looking frightened*): What? You mean there's nothing else?

MD: I'm sorry.

The oncologist leaves the room.

SCENARIO TWO:

MD: Mrs. M, umm, uhhh, how are you feeling?

MRS. M (*tentatively, after a pause*): I'm a bit better, thank you.

MD (*speaking quickly and cheerfully*): Well, I'd like to have the team that helps with comfort come see you. Is that all right?

MRS. M: Sure, if you think they can help.

MD: Great, I'll tell them to come by.

The physician leaves the room.

Not surprisingly, the article criticizes both approaches—the first for bluntly abandoning the patient, and the second for skirting the truth. It goes on to suggest that the physician choose a comfortable, private place, and then offers an idealized script, in which the doctor summarizes the situation ("The cancer is getting worse. . . . The scans showed the tumors in the liver are bigger") and asks Mrs. M what she expects will happen:

MRS. M (*thoughtful, and a bit teary*): Well, I guess I'm going to die of this cancer. (*Starting to cry more*)

MD (*sitting quietly, moves box of tissues closer to patient*): . . . What have you been thinking?

MRS. M: Well, I'd like it to be peaceful. I'd like to just fall asleep. And I want my husband to be able to cope, and for my children to grow up and remember me. . . . (*Brightening a bit*) And I'd like to go to Las Vegas one more time!

MD (*laughing*): It sounds like what you are saying is you want to make the most of the time that is left.

MRS. M: That's right.

The "successful" discussion from the oncology journal points to the obvious problem of trying to codify such practice. Today, after caring for patients with advanced cancers for more than twenty-five years, I have told nearly five hundred peo-

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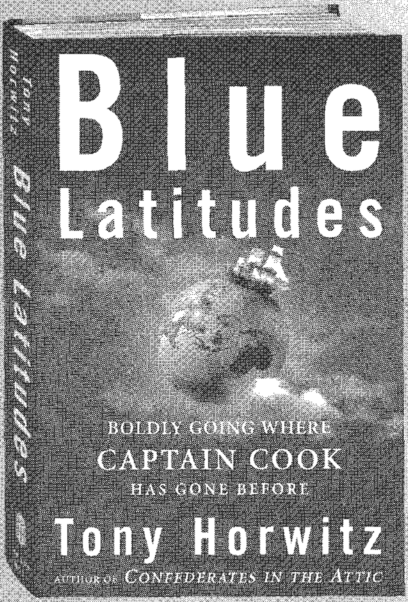

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ple that they were going to die; rarely has such a conversation gone as smoothly or the conclusion been as tidy as the journal's model. But "How not to" scenarios, like the first two in the article, may at least help prevent the kinds of blunders I made early in my career. And, as the study showed, doctors can do much more to insure that patients and their families receive sufficient information to make important decisions.

Work is now being done to identify the key problems. In 1995, the Open Society Institute sponsored an initiative called the Project on Death in America; Kathleen Foley, the neuro-oncologist from Sloan-Kettering, is its director. "The purpose is to educate physicians, nurses, and social workers who will provide leadership in academic hospitals," she told me. It's not clear what "leadership" means in this context, and when I asked how effective such measures were, she said, "We know that the current generation doesn't know how to do this well. But if the role models know it we hope for a domino effect that will make it easier for the next generation."

The Open Society Institute will have spent forty-five million dollars on education by the end of next year, and the palliative-care center supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, where Diane Meier works, has spent a hundred and forty million dollars on advancing palliative care over the past decade. These efforts have resulted in changes to the profession. Since the late nineteen-nineties, Foley told me, "the American Board of Internal Medicine has required demonstration of a level of competency in palliative care and symptom management." As part of medical training, an actor will go through a script with a resident, who must demonstrate his or her ability to guide the person through decision-making—such as coming to an end-of-life directive and coming up with a plan for pain management.

After I talked with Maxine, I arranged for her to be transferred to a special hospice unit, and soon she began to drift in and out of consciousness. The cancer pressing on the cranial nerves connected to the back of her throat and her tongue had made it difficult for her to swallow. The nurses had to suction her saliva to prevent her from choking. Shortly before noon a week later, I was paged and told that Maxine's death appeared imminent.

Maxine's parents were sitting by her bed when I came in. They stood up, and Mrs. Barlow hugged me, crying. Mr. Barlow's face was frozen with grief.

Maxine was no longer conscious. Every few seconds, her chest heaved, and she gasped. She was entering what is called the agonal phase—taken from the Greek *agon*, which means struggle—a period that precedes death and can last from a few minutes to hours.

I warned Maxine's parents that this was usually harrowing, and that sometimes family members preferred not to witness it.

"I want to be with my baby," Maxine's mother said.

Maxine's hands began to twitch and her breathing moved into a syncopated pattern called Cheyne-Stokes, a short set of staccato breaths bracketing a long pause.

Mrs. Barlow raised her head.

"Maxie, we love you, and God loves you."

Mr. Barlow sat straight, his hands clasped in his lap.

Sometimes as a patient dies there is a convulsive burst of muscular activity, like a grand-mal seizure. I braced myself for it when Maxine's fingers began to twitch, as if she were grasping for an invisible object. These muscle contractions continued for some forty minutes. Then a harsh rattling sound came from her chest. I glanced at the nurse, who was next to the morphine infusion. There was a single explosive jerk of Maxine's body, a sharp arching of her chest, followed by a series of fluttering movements in the muscles of her neck.

The Barlows stood up. Maxine's skin was already changing to an ashen hue. I placed my stethoscope over her heart. "I am sorry," the nurse said. I reached over and took Mr. Barlow's hand, and then turned and embraced Mrs. Barlow as she cried.

I left the Barlows and went to the nurses' station to fill out Maxine's death certificate. I designated the primary cause as respiratory failure due to metastatic breast cancer to the brain and handed the chart with the death certificate to the floor clerk. The time of death was 12:57 P.M. ♦

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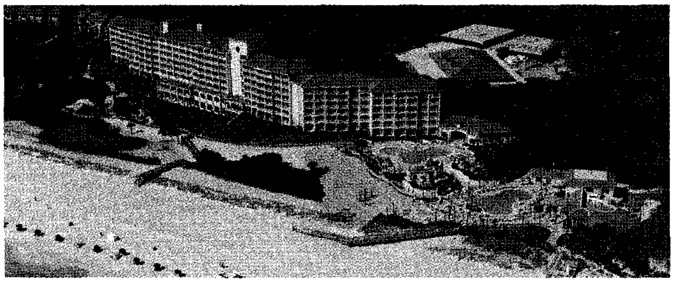

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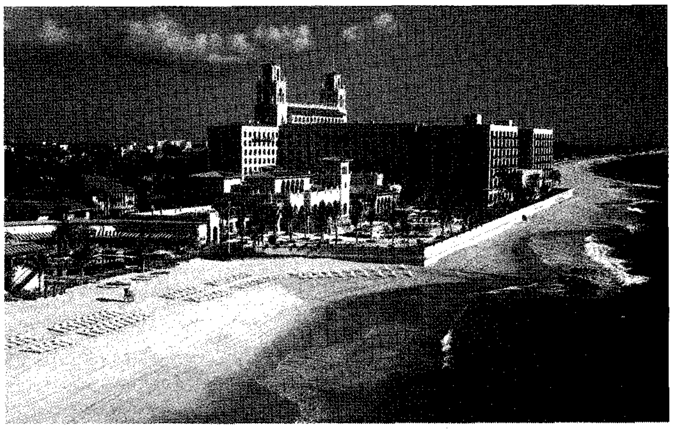

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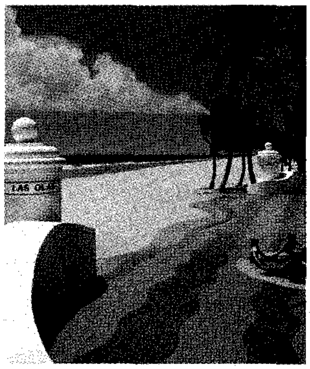

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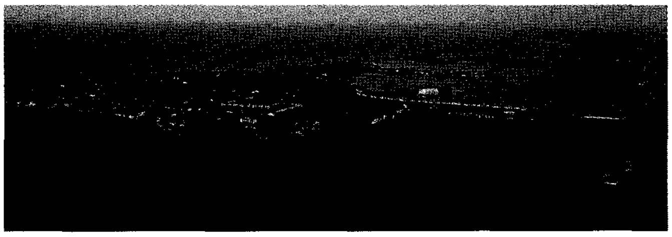
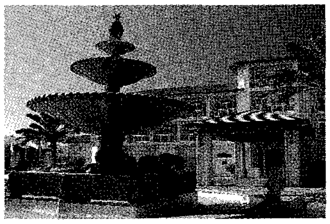


Ponte Vedra Inn & Club



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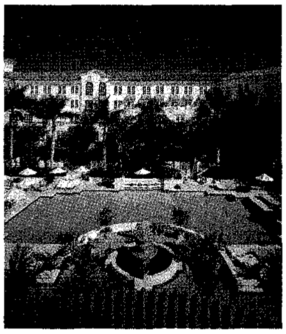

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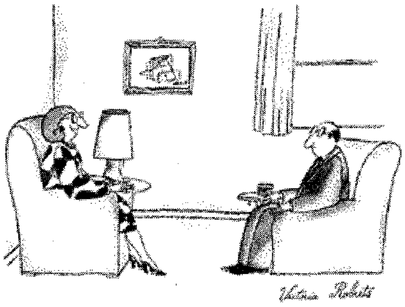

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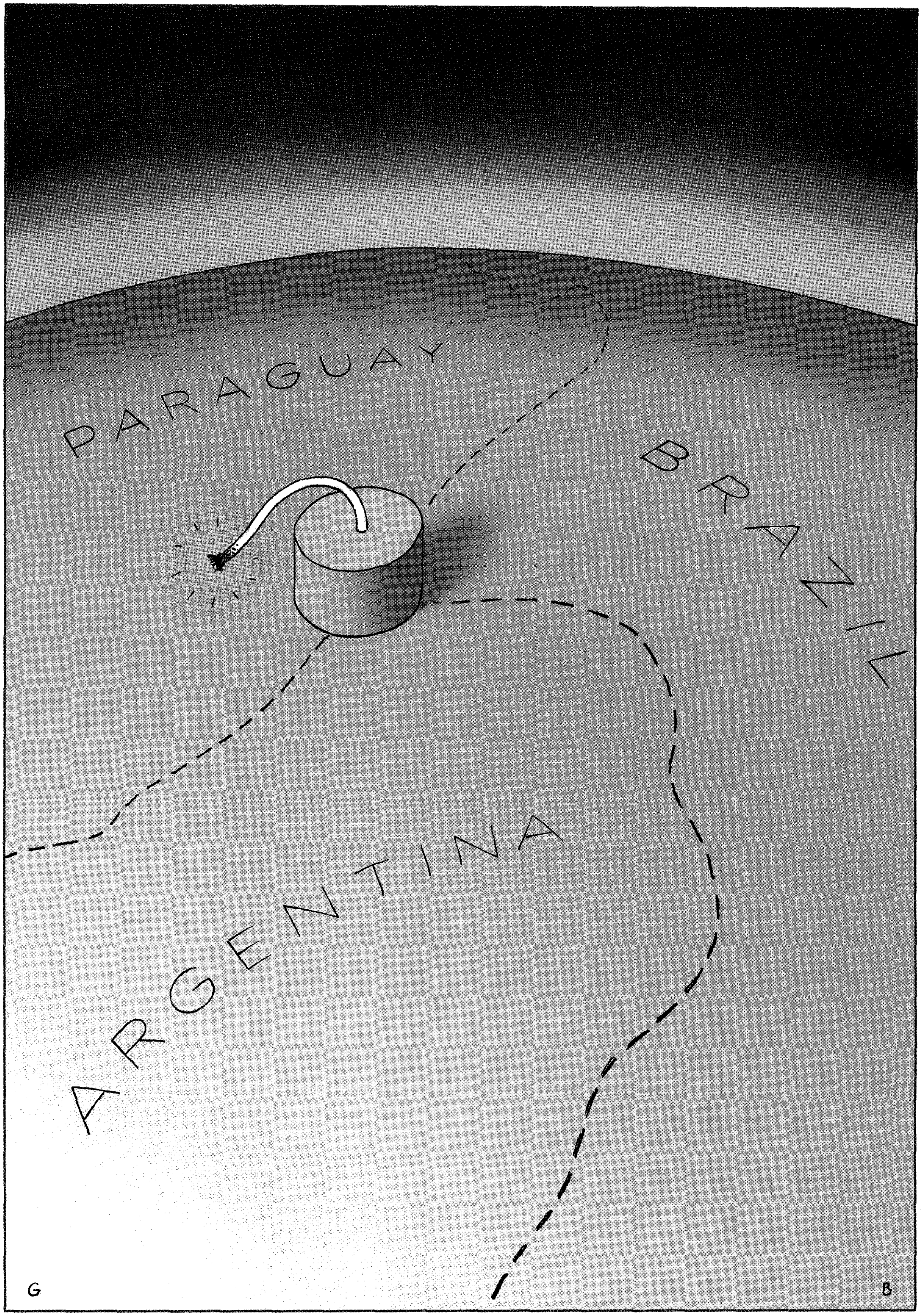
PARAGUAY
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A REPORTER AT LARGE

IN THE PARTY OF GOD

Hezbollah sets up operations in South America and the United States.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

The patrol boat, a Boston Whaler, was worn at its edges, and it was pocked with bullet holes along its starboard side. It had a four-man crew, officers of the Brazilian Federal Police. They carried AK-47s and side arms, and they wore jeans, sunglasses, and bulletproof vests, which made them sweat. The patrol chief steered the boat into the middle of the Paraná River—half a mile wide, muddy, and sluggish. He opened up the boat's two Suzuki engines, and as we moved north the outskirts of the Brazilian city of Foz do Iguaçu came into view on the right; on the opposite side was the Paraguayan jungle, where smoke from cooking fires rose above the tree line. The chief, who was worried about snipers, kept the boat moving fast. He pointed to a series of chutes, dug out from the banks on the Paraguayan side, down which drug smugglers move bales of marijuana to the river.

A decaying iron bridge, the International Friendship Bridge, connects Foz do Iguaçu to its Paraguayan sister city, Ciudad del Este, the City of the East. Ciudad del Este is at the heart of the zone known as the Triple Frontier, the point where Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina meet, which has served for nearly thirty years as a hospitable base of operations for smugglers, counterfeiters, and tax dodgers. The Triple Frontier has earned its reputation as one of the most lawless places in the world. Now, it is believed, the Frontier is also the center of Middle Eastern terrorism in South America.

From the boat, we could see that the traffic above us on the bridge was at a standstill. Between twenty and twenty-five thousand people cross the bridge each day, Brazilian police officials said. Pedestrians, many carrying huge packages, follow a narrow walkway that runs along the bridge's outer edge; motorcyclists maneuver among trucks and buses. From the river, one sees only a jumble of towers clustered near the edge of Ciudad del Este, and the men on the patrol looked that way with distaste. "It's filthy and disgusting," the chief said. "Everything there is illegal." And the local police? The men smiled, and the chief said, "They do what they do, and we do what we do."

The chief explained that the underworld of Ciudad del Este is dominated by Asian and Middle Eastern mobsters. Many of them prefer to float contraband across the river rather than use the bridge, but the men caught smuggling are invariably poor Paraguayans. As he spoke, we passed, on the Paraguayan shore, a group of shirtless men, who stared at the boat. "They're just waiting for us to leave the river," the chief said. "Then they'll start across." The sun by now was setting, and the police seldom patrol at night. It would be too dangerous, the chief said.

The men on the boat were all residents of Foz do Iguaçu—Foz, as it is usually called—an orderly city that employs street sweepers and traffic police. I asked them if they ever visited Ciudad del Este. One said that he used to go for the shopping. Much of Ciudad del Este is built around vast, canyonlike shopping malls. The better malls sell legitimately acquired products at discounted prices, and the rougher ones specialize in stolen and pirated goods.

Roughly two hundred thousand people live in the Ciudad del Este region, including a substantial minority of Arab Muslims; in the Triple Frontier zone, there may be as many as thirty thousand. According to intelligence officials in the region and in Washington, this Muslim community has in its midst a hard core of terrorists, many of them associated with Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite group backed by the Iranian government; some with Hamas, the Palestinian fundamentalist group; and some with Al Qaeda. It is, over all, a community under the influence of extreme Islamic beliefs; intelligence officials told me that some of the Triple Frontier Arabs held celebrations on September 11th of last year and also on the anniversary this year. These officials said that Hezbollah runs weekend training camps on farms cut out of the rain forest of the Triple Frontier. In at least one of these camps, in the remote jungle terrain near Foz do Iguaçu, young adults get weapons training and children are indoctrinated in Hezbollah ideology—a mixture of anti-American and anti-Jewish views inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini.

In the Triple Frontier, Hezbollah raises money from legitimate businesses but, more frequently, from illicit activities, ranging from drug smuggling to the pirating of compact disks. Unlike the other radical Islamic groups in the Triple Frontier, Hezbollah, it is said, has the capability to commit acts of terror.

A billboard advertising the services of the Kamikaze Tour Company stands near the Foz do Iguaçu entrance to the International Friendship Bridge. It is faster to walk the half-mile span than to drive, and so I joined a line of Guaraní Indians and Brazilian traders who had assembled one morning under a sign on the Foz side that read, "You Are the Strong Ones, Not the Drugs." A Brazilian police helicopter circled overhead.

In Ciudad del Este, there is an immediate sense of heat and claustrophobic closeness. The streets, jammed with people and worked by watch sellers and money changers, give way to alleys, and the alleys open up onto strips of badly built shops. The smallest shops, some barely six feet by six feet, are called *lojas*, and are crammed with in-line skates and cellular telephones and pharmaceuticals—almost anything that could fall off a truck. Guaraní women sit on the

GUY BILLOUT

ground, drinking maté through metal straws. The sidewalks are dense with stands selling sunglasses and perfume, and with tables of pornographic videos. Marijuana is sold openly; so are pirated CDs. The music of Eminem came from one shop; from another, there were sounds familiar to me from South Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley—martial Hezbollah music. I bought a cassette recording of the speeches of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader.

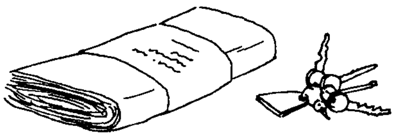
In a shop called Caza y Pesca Monday, or the Monday Hunting and Fishing Store, the owner offered to sell me an AK-47 rifle for three hundred and seventy dollars. For an extra thirty dollars, he said, he could have it smuggled to my hotel in Brazil. I asked whether it was possible to acquire explosives. He said it would be more difficult, though not impossible. The cost of smuggling them would be significantly more than thirty dollars.

A few blocks from the center of town, the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad occupies the first three floors of an unfinished fourteen-story apartment house. The building is painted green and white and topped by an oversized crescent and star, the symbols of Islam. When I arrived, the mosque was opening for afternoon prayers, and I was introduced to Muhammad Youssef Abdallah, who owns the building and built the mosque. Abdallah, a short, round, voluble man in his fifties, is an immigrant from a village in South Lebanon, near the Israeli border.

He told me that he came to the Triple Frontier more than twenty years ago, in a wave of Lebanese immigrants who had discovered a part of South America that welcomed international traders. Like most Lebanese businessmen in Ciudad del Este, he lives in the more orderly climate of Foz do Iguaçu. He also has a farm outside Foz. For many years, he said, he owned one of the malls in Ciudad del Este, but now he devotes his time to the propagation of the faith. He invited me into his office, on the second floor of the mosque. On the wall was a portrait of Sayyid Muhammad Hussayn Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of Hezbollah; on a shelf was a gun.

I told Abdallah that, a month earlier, I had interviewed Fadlallah in his home in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Hezbollah stronghold. He asked if I knew his cousin, Hani Abdallah, Fadlallah's spokesman, and seemed pleased when I said yes. In 1994, according to Paraguayan intelligence officials, Fadlallah travelled undercover to Ciudad del Este, on an Iranian passport, in order to bless the mosque. Abdallah was quick to say that Fadlallah plays no official role in the work of Hezbollah—that he is merely a spiritual adviser to poor Shiites throughout the world. Fadlallah and his followers said much the same thing when we met in Lebanon.

Abdallah, who has never been charged with any wrongdoing, was circumspect in describing his activities. "If you touch on Hezbollah, you get a shock," he told me, and added that charges sometimes levelled in the press against the Muslims of the Triple Frontier are untrue. "We are not involved in terrorism," he said. Many of the Muslims who once worshipped in the mosque are afraid to visit now, he said, believing that it is under surveillance by Israel and the United States. Abdallah insisted that he himself had no connection to Hezbollah, but he conceded that, like other Lebanese businessmen, he had given money to the group. "Five years ago, people were expected to give twenty per cent of their income," he said.



I asked him what he meant by "expected."

"Right, expected," he replied. A look of helplessness crossed his face. "What are people supposed to do?" he asked.

Abdallah would not elaborate, but, according to South American investigators and two Lebanese who once worked in the Triple Frontier, such donations were made under duress. At the beginning of each month, they said, a Hezbollah official named Sobhi Fayad or one of his associates would visit shops owned by Lebanese immigrants—Shiites, but also Sunni Muslims and Christians. The shop owner would be handed a certificate thanking him for the support he had provided to various Hezbollah-run charitable groups. A dollar amount would be written on each certificate—a South American investigator showed me one with the figure ten thousand dollars—and the shop owner would be expected to pay that sum. After that, the certificate

A SWEET PLACE

How happy are the girls on the cocoa tin,
as though there could be nothing in the world but chocolate!
As though to confirm this, a wall stood nearby,
displaying gold medals from various expositions—
Groningen 1893, Anvers 1887—whose judges had had the good sense
to reward the noble chocolatiers. All love's bright-bad sweetness
gleams in those glorious pastilles.
                                        But the empathy valve's
shut by someone—a fibrous mist
invades their stubborn cheeks and flaxen hair.
Time for the next audition.

Who to watch? What new celeb's dithering
is this, commemorated in blazing script?

The torches are extinguished in marl.
I will live in a house in the middle of the road,
it says here. No shit!
What did I do to deserve this? Who controls
this anger management seminar? They've had their way with me;
I am as I was before. Thank heaven! If I could but remember

how that was. *Always, it's nightfall*
in a wood, some paths are descended,
and looking out over the ropy landscape, one sees
a necessity that was at the beginning.
Further up there is fog. But it's nice being standing:
We should be home soon,
dearest, a dry hearth awaits us, and the indulgence of sleep.
What if I really was a drifter,
would you still like me? Would you vote
for me in the straw polls of November, wait for me
in the anteroom of December, embrace the turbulent, glittering skies
the New Year brings? Lie down with me once and for all?

The radio is silent, fretful; it bides its time
and the world forgets to consider. There is room to tabulate
the wonders of its sesquicentennials,
but the aftermath's unremarkable, picked
clean by a snarky wind.

Then I became as one who followed.

—*John Ashbery*

would be put in his shopwindow—and no more "donations" would be sought for the remainder of the month. Otherwise, the shop owner would be warned, and then his relatives in Lebanon would be warned, that if they didn't comply Hezbollah would spread rumors about them. "People would be told that they are spies for Israel," one South American investigator told me. Some were beaten. "It's a very effective system," the investigator said.

The Fayad operation was expert in laundering money. According to intelligence documents provided to me by regional investigators, Hezbollah has used traders from India to move money from Paraguay to the Middle East. The documents referred to an Indian named Rajkumar Naraindas Sabnani, who does business in the Triple Frontier and in Hong Kong; investigators allege that he arranged to ship goods to Paraguay, receiving payment far in excess of their value. After subtracting his own fee and paying for the actual goods, Sabnani wired the surplus to banks in the United States or in Lebanon. Sabnani is believed to be currently in Hong Kong.

Abdallah, the founder of the Prophet Muhammad mosque, says that people in the Triple Frontier are giving less these days, because the region's economy is in very poor shape. But investigators in South America and experts on the group nevertheless believe that the amount raised in South America over the years is in the tens of millions of dollars; according to one Paraguayan official, two years ago Hezbollah raised twelve million dollars in the Triple Frontier. Hezbollah's annual budget is more than a hundred million dollars, provided by the Iranian government directly and by an international network of fund-raisers.

Besides Sobhi Fayad, several other figures in the Triple Frontier's Arab community play important roles in raising money for Hezbollah. One of the most notorious is a fugitive: Ali Khalil Mehri, a man considered by Paraguayan authorities to be a leading distributor of pirated compact disks. According to Paraguayan investigators, Mehri left for São Paulo, Brazil, then moved on to Europe and, finally, to Lebanon, where he is today. Sobhi Fayad is in jail in Asunción, the Paraguayan capital, awaiting trial on tax charges and on charges of associating with a criminal organization. Paraguay has no anti-terror law, and so it is not illegal to donate money to terrorist groups, as it is in the United States. "It's exactly the same as Al Capone," one investigator told me. "You have to get them on tax evasion."

In the days following September 11th of last year, the Paraguayans arrested twenty-three people in the region of Ciudad del Este and in southern Paraguay on suspicion of involvement with Hezbollah or other organizations. But Carlos Altemburger, the chief of the Paraguayan Secretariat for the Prevention and Investigation of Terrorism, told me that most of these detainees have been released and many have left the country. Even though the Paraguayan government is considered among the most corrupt in South America, the terrorism secretariat is thought by American officials to be free of corruption. Altemburger told me that he would like the government to impose strict controls on the border region, which would make it more difficult for Hezbollah members who live in Brazil to travel so freely into Paraguay. His requests, he said diplomatically, are still being weighed by the government.

The openness of the borders in the Triple Frontier, as much as its free-for-all ethos, makes the region particularly inviting for terrorists. (When I ran into a bureaucratic problem entering Paraguay, I was advised to sneak in by riding a motorcycle with Brazilian plates, and wearing a helmet to disguise my face. It worked perfectly.) The open borders provide politicians and senior law-enforcement officials of the three nations with a ready excuse for the presence of terrorists in cities under their nominal control.

Joaquim Mesquita, the chief of the Brazilian Federal Police in Foz do Iguaçu, dismissed the idea that his third of the Triple Frontier was a haven for terrorists. "We have a marijuana problem, and cigarette smuggling," he said. But, he continued, "we don't have any concrete evidence that this is a terrorist region." In Asunción, I met with the interior minister, a former chief of the national police named Víctor Hermoza. "Most of the Arabs live on the Brazil side, I should point out," Hermoza said, and added, "Anyway, the Arabs are all moving to Chile."

Hermoza, who has an open, friendly

face, insists that his country is doing everything it can to aid the American war on terror. In fact, he said, with a suggestion of pride, he takes his orders from American diplomats. "The national police cannot do anything without the American Embassy," he said. "We rely on their intelligence."

We met in his office at the Interior Ministry, in downtown Asunción. Paraguay is small and poor, and perhaps best known for the longtime rule of Alfredo Stroessner, who made the country a hideout for Nazi fugitives, including Josef Mengele. Crime is rising, and the economy has been badly hurt by the collapses in Brazil and Argentina. Some Paraguayans have taken to spray-painting walls with the slogan "*Stroessner Vuelve!*," or "Stroessner Will Return!" Stroessner was deposed in 1989, and now, at the age of eighty-nine, lives in exile in Brazil.

Hermoza, who began his career during Stroessner's regime, suggests that the country is no different from its neighbors. "There's corruption in all three of the countries" that share the Triple Frontier, he said. "Even America has corruption. That's why you have internal-affairs departments in your police."

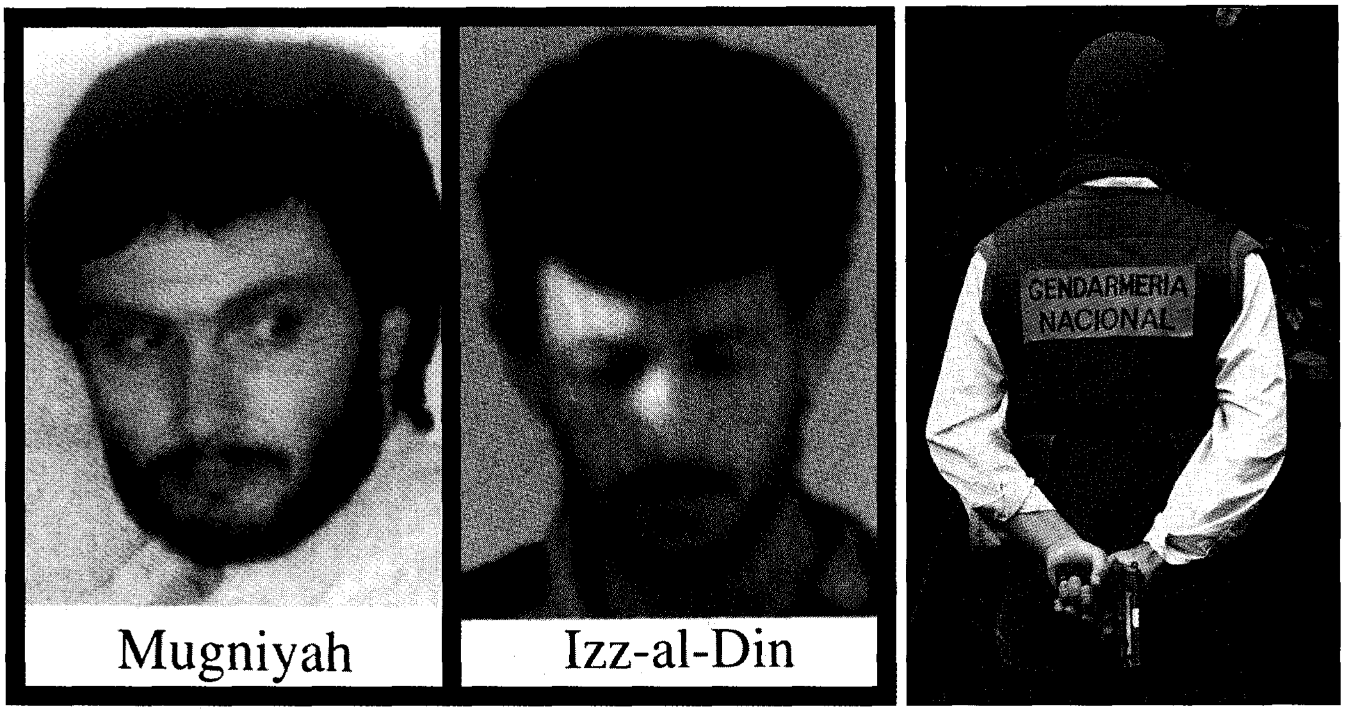
I asked Hermoza why the Interior Ministry didn't institute more stringent border controls. He listened to the story of my own illegal crossing, and said, "You're probably going to have to pay an extra fee at the airport." He did not seem bothered by the fact that a foreigner could sneak into his country by hiding inside a motorcycle helmet, but he said that he had raised the question of bridge security with local officials recently when he visited Ciudad del Este. "They showed me why they couldn't do it," he said. "They started to check cars, and within four or five minutes there was a line that was as long as the bridge." Economic considerations would outweigh security needs for the time being.

Sobhi Fayad (right) allegedly ran a fund-raising operation in the Triple Frontier.

Like Hezbollah, Al Qaeda does considerable fund-raising in Ciudad del Este, investigators told me, and they named the Al Qaeda point men as Ali Nizar Dahroug and his uncle. Ali Dahroug is in jail in Ciudad del Este awaiting trial on tax-evasion charges; his uncle is a fugitive. The Dahrougs came to the attention of local investigators when the uncle's name was found in an address book belonging to the highest-ranking Al Qaeda official to be captured so far by the United States, Abu Zubaydah. According to investigators and intelligence files, Ali Dahroug owned a small perfume shop in Ciudad del Este. The entire enterprise was worth no more than two thousand dollars, so investigators were startled to learn that he was wiring as much as eighty thousand dollars each month to banks in the United States, the Middle East, and Europe. Hamas's chief fund-raiser in the Triple Frontier is Ayman Ghotme, who collected funds for the Holy Land Foundation, a Texas-based organization that sent money to Hamas but was closed down by American officials after September 11th. Ghotme lives in São Paulo, according to investigators. But the dominant terror group in the region is Hezbollah, and its ability to carry out terror operations in South America, investigators say, is due to one man: Imad Mugniyah.

Until September 11th of last year, Mugniyah was considered by American officials to be the world's most dangerous terrorist, and many terrorism experts still believe this to be true. For a decade, the American and Israeli governments have made repeated attempts to capture or kill him. The Israeli Air Force, which frequently dispatches fighter jets across Lebanon, has equipped many of its airplanes with advanced signal intelligence "packages," and it uses these to track his whereabouts. Several years ago, the Israelis killed Mugniyah's brother, and allegedly set a trap for Mugniyah at the funeral, but he didn't appear. Some believe that he has had plastic surgery, and that, in recent years, he has not moved beyond Lebanon and Iran, for fear of capture. Sources told me that Mugniyah will not even travel through the Beirut airport, believing that paramilitary officers commanded by the C.I.A.'s Counterterrorist Center have the airport under permanent surveillance.

Mugniyah's operation—known as the external security apparatus—is Hezbollah's most lethal weapon. It is commonly believed that Mugniyah is behind nearly every major act of terrorism that has been staged by Hezbollah during the last two decades; he is thought to have agents not only in South America but in Europe, Southeast Asia, West Africa, and even the United States. His operatives in the Triple Frontier include Assad Ahmad Barakat, an important fund-raiser for Hezbollah. (Paraguayan police discovered a letter in which Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, thanked Barakat for his efforts on behalf of children orphaned when their fathers became suicide bombers.) Terrorism experts say that Ali Kassam, who runs a Shiite religious



Imad Mugniyah, Hezbollah's key terrorist operative, and the T.W.A. hijacker Hassan Izz-al-Din; an Argentine border guard.

LEFT: REUTERS/FBI; RIGHT: FLORIAN WAGNER/FOCUS/MATRIX

center in Foz, is a close contact of Mugniyah's as well, and so is a sheikh named Bilal Mohsen Wehbi, a Lebanese who was trained in Iran, and who reports to the Iranian Cultural Affairs Ministry. The Ministry often provides diplomatic cover for both Hezbollah operatives and Iranian intelligence agents. It is believed that Mugniyah takes orders from the office of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, but that he reports to a man named Ghassem Soleimani, the chief of a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps called Al Quds, or the Jerusalem Force—the arm of the Iranian government responsible for sponsoring terror attacks on Israeli targets.

Mugniyah is believed to have established European cells; in the nineteen-eighties, he recruited operatives in France and Germany. In South America, his reach goes beyond the Triple Frontier. A cell in Incarnación, a city south of Ciudad del Este, was run until recently by a man named Karim Diab; a regional investigator said that Diab has been sent to Angola to start a Hezbollah cell there.

Unlike Osama bin Laden, Mugniyah does not give interviews or issue statements on the Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera. There are only two known photographs of Mugniyah, and even these have been called into question. He is believed to have been born in the Lebanese village of Tir Dibba, near Tyre, on July 12, 1962, into a prominent family; his father, Sheikh Muhammad Jawad Mugniyah, is thought to have been a Shiite scholar. According to Robert Baer, an ex-C.I.A. officer who spent a good part of his career tracking Mugniyah, even the basic details of his childhood are unknown to intelligence services. "Mugniyah systematically had all traces of himself removed," Baer says. "He erased himself. He had his records removed from high school, and his passport application was stolen. There are no civil records in Lebanon with his name in them."

By his middle teens, Mugniyah was a gun-carrying foot soldier in the Lebanese civil war, which began in 1975. He received his early training not with his fellow-Shiites, who were then unarmed and not very radicalized, but with Yasir Arafat and the Fatah movement of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Until 1982, when Arafat was expelled from Lebanon as a result of the Israeli invasion, his power was concentrated in South Lebanon, along the border with Israel, much as Hezbollah's is today. Fatah maintained training camps not only for Palestinians but for members of other, international terror groups as well. Many of the Iranian Shiites who later overthrew the Shah were trained there.

Mugniyah became a member of Arafat's personal bodyguard unit, Force 17. (It still exists in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.) In the early nineteen-eighties, after the P.L.O.'s departure from Lebanon, Mugniyah became a bodyguard for Sayyid Muhammad Fadlallah, Hezbollah's spiritual leader. Then, suddenly, according to Baer and another intelligence source, Mugniyah appeared, along with Hassan Nasrallah, as a central figure in the Islamic Jihad Organization, one of the names under which Hezbollah operated when, in the early eighties, it was still a clandestine group. The first major act of terrorism attributed to Mugniyah was the April, 1983, bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut. Sixty-three people died, including six C.I.A. officers. It is believed that Mugniyah was involved in the simultaneous bombings, six months later, of the Marine barracks in Beirut, in which two hundred and forty-one died, and the French military barracks, a short distance away, in which fifty-eight died. Mugniyah is also thought to have been behind much of the hostage-taking in Lebanon in the mid-eighties, and some reports claim that he was personally involved in the torture of William Buckley, the C.I.A. Beirut station chief, who

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died in Hezbollah captivity. He has also been tied to the Khobar Towers bombing, in Saudi Arabia, six years ago, in which nineteen American servicemen were killed.

In 1985, two of Mugniyah's men hijacked a T.W.A. airplane, a Boeing 727, on a scheduled run between Athens and Rome. Almost immediately after seizing control, the hijackers, Hassan Izz-al-Din and Muhammad Ali Hamadi, began searching the plane for American servicemen. They soon discovered a group of Navy divers and a thirty-eight-year-old Army Reserve major named Kurt Carlson.

The hijackers were demanding the release of Shiite prisoners in Kuwait and more than seven hundred Shiite prisoners in Israel. Their behavior was erratic; they forced the plane to land in Beirut, then go to Algiers, and then fly back to Beirut. In Beirut, Izz-al-Din and Hamadi executed one of the divers, Robert Stethem, and dumped his body on the airport tarmac.

Carlson today lives in Rockford, Illinois; he is a builder, a friendly, small-boned man, who talks easily about his experience. On the tarmac in Algiers, Carlson said, Hamadi would preach the virtues of the Shiite revolution in Iran from the cockpit window to whoever happened to be listening below. "Every time Hamadi said the name Khomeini, Izz-al-Din would kick me in the back," Carlson said. Carlson was beaten steadily for several days, and his beatings intensified when the hijackers' demands for fuel weren't met. "They kept yelling, 'One American must die, one American must die,' " he said.

At one point, Carlson was dragged into the cockpit. "All of a sudden, I felt a blow, and I heard the captain yelling, 'They're beating and killing Americans! I need fuel!' Meanwhile, Hamadi was screaming in Arabic. He was hitting me with a steel pipe. When he got tired of hitting me with a pipe, he would drop-kick me two or three times. I wasn't making any sound, but I realized that the captain had kept the mike open, and that he wanted me to make sounds, to convince the tower to get us fuel. So I started grunting."

After the plane flew to Beirut the second time, American intelligence officials believe, Mugniyah boarded it; his fingerprints were reportedly identified in one of the bathrooms. American hostages were taken from the plane and dispersed around Beirut. Carlson, along with four of the surviving Navy divers, was put in the custody of the Shiite Amal militia, a less extreme radical group. The hostages were held in a basement, where they were subjected to mock executions and were fed intermittently.

"One day, we were told we had to speak to a visitor from Hezbollah," Carlson recalled. "They took us into another room. There was a bunch of guys there. One was a short guy with a beard. He just looked at us. The Amal guys who were our guards kept close to us. I felt like they were trying to protect us. This guy started asking us questions. Where we're from, what unit. All of a sudden, he let loose with a tirade. He spoke some English. I remember that his eyes were like glass. You could feel the hate coming out of him. He started screaming about the Israelis, how they're supported by the U.S. The Israelis were so bad they wouldn't consent to Red Cross visits to the Shiite prisoners. He was just screaming.

"One of the divers, Stuart Dahl, answered him," Carlson went on. "He said, 'If you believe in the rights of prisoners, you'll let the Red Cross see us.' This guy, the one who was screaming, just about fell over. He didn't expect anyone to answer him. They started talking among themselves, the Hezbollah guys. Now, there was the guy just behind the one who was screaming. I hadn't noticed him before. All of the Hezbollah guys turned to him. They spoke, and then he led them out of the room. I believe that that man was Imad Mugniyah." After seventeen days, Carlson and the remaining four Americans were freed.

Argentine police believe that Hezbollah worked in concert with its Iranian sponsors to bomb the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, an attack that killed twenty-nine people. Investigators suspect that Mugniyah may have visited the Triple Frontier two years later, when Hezbollah allegedly planned the suicide bombing of the Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association, or Jewish community center, known by its Spanish acronym, AMIA. The attack on the AMIA building, the deadliest anti-Semitic attack since the end of the Second World War, killed eighty-five people. The bombing profoundly disturbed Jewish communities throughout Latin America, and forced Jewish leaders to turn their synagogues and community centers into virtual fortresses. There are approximately two hundred thousand Jews in Argentina—it is South America's largest Jewish community—and today, spurred by the worst economic crisis in the country's history, many are leaving for Israel.

Twenty men have been on trial since late September of last year on charges related to the bombing, but these men—all of them Argentines—are considered by investigators to be secondary players in the attack. Alberto Nisman, one of the prosecutors, believes that the bombing succeeded in part because of lax oversight by the Paraguayan and Brazilian governments; Argentine officials believe that key participants in the attack entered Argentina through the Triple Frontier. Víctor Hermoza, the Paraguayan interior minister, was skeptical. "The bomb could have been built anywhere," he said, adding that he does not believe that Hezbollah maintains terror cells in Paraguay. But Hezbollah is so deeply rooted in the Triple Frontier that, one Paraguayan official said, he believes that the bomb was almost certainly built in the area of Ciudad del Este. "It's impossible to believe that it wasn't," he said. "People were absolutely free here to do whatever they wanted."

Argentine officials have openly accused Iran of involvement in the bombing, and they have accused Hezbollah of carrying it out (the court has identified the man believed to be the suicide bomber but his name has not yet been released). Four of the defendants are police officers, who are accused of collaborating with the bombers. Charges that the police force in Argentina harbors officers with anti-Semitic tendencies have circulated for years.

The trial is being held in an Art Deco-style theatre in the basement of a courthouse near the harbor of Buenos Aires. Heavy mauve drapes cover the walls, and bulletproof glass separates the spectators from the defendants. On the day that I visited, early this year, the building was watched by snipers in flak jackets and police on horseback. In the courtroom, a survivor of the bombing was describing what had happened when a white Renault van holding a six-hundred-pound bomb was driven into the seven-story AMIA building—and the explosion sheared off its front.

Earlier this year, it was disclosed that a man calling himself Abdolghassem Mesbahi, who claimed to be an Iranian intelligence official, had told investigators that former President Carlos Saúl Menem of Argentina maintained close relations with Iran and took a ten-million-dollar bribe to cover up Iran's involvement in the bombing. Menem, who is of Syrian descent, has denied the charge. He hopes to run again for President.

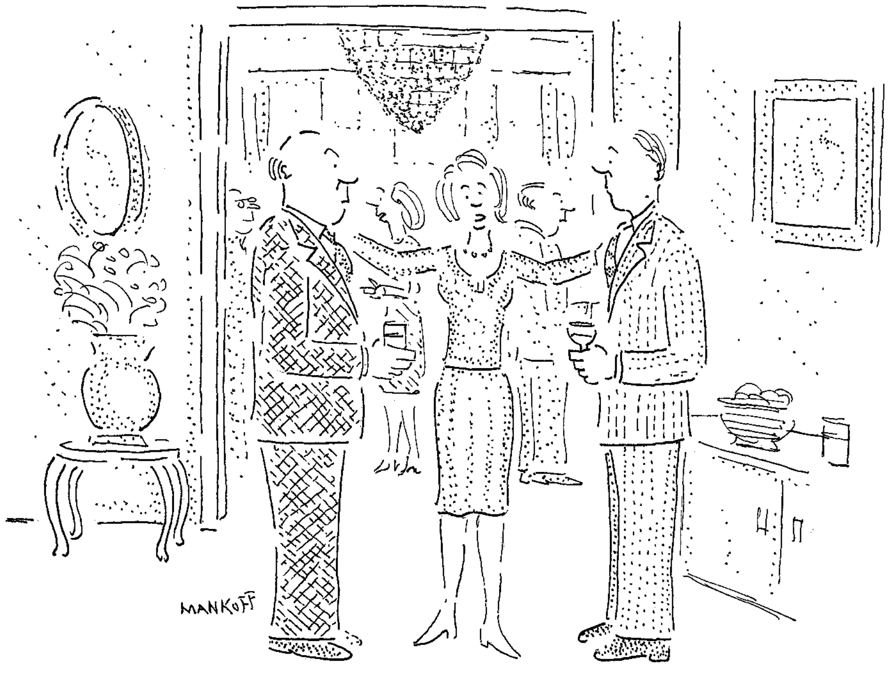
Lawyers for the Jewish community have used Mesbahi's testimony, along with information gathered in Argentina and abroad, to construct a time line of activities leading up to the bombing. The head lawyer, Marta Nercellas, described to me a plot that was set in motion at 4:30 P.M. on August 14, 1993, in a Tehran office belonging to the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence. According to the time line, the Ministry, with the involvement of the minister, Ali Fallahian, asked a team made up of Lebanese Hezbollah operatives and its own agents, many of whom worked under diplomatic cover, to plan the attack.

An important figure in the plot, according to Nercellas and other investigators, was Mohsen Rabbani, an Iranian who was appointed to the Buenos Aires Embassy as a cultural attaché just a few months before the bombing. Rabbani, who was barred from Argentina after evidence of his involvement began to emerge, is believed to have been a few blocks away from the AMIA building in the minutes before the attack.

Alberto Nisman hopes that information will come out during testimony that will allow Argentine authorities to pursue the actual conspirators, including Rabbani. But Nisman says that he is focussed on the man who they think orchestrated the bombing: Imad Mugniyah. Standing outside the courtroom during a recess, Nisman said, "Mugniyah would be the ultimate. That is our target."

Not only Mugniyah has eluded capture; so have his associates. Hamadi, the T.W.A. hijacker believed by Carlson to have shot Robert Stethem, was captured several years ago in Germany, and he is now in prison there, but Izz-al-Din is, like Mugniyah, thought to be in either Lebanon or Iran.

The United States has come close to arresting Mugniyah at least twice. In 1985, American intelligence learned that Mugniyah was in Paris. According to Duane Clarridge, a former chief of the C.I.A.'s Counterterrorist Center, the French refused to help, apparently because they were negotiating with Mugniyah for the release of French hostages in Lebanon. Several years later, Ameri-



"Francophobe, meet Francophile."

can officials informed the Saudi government that Mugniyah was due to arrive in Saudi Arabia; in an effort to keep the United States from acting against Mugniyah on Saudi soil, the Saudis refused to let the plane land.

When I spoke to Hezbollah officials in Beirut, they denied knowing anything about Mugniyah; Hezbollah's allies call him a figment of the Israeli-influenced American imagination. Only one person in the Hezbollah orbit acknowledged even having heard of Mugniyah: the leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a man named Ramadan Abdallah Shallah. Palestinian Islamic Jihad is closely allied with Hezbollah; both are on the payroll of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

In Damascus in February, I asked Shallah about Mugniyah and Hezbollah. Shallah is not unschooled in public relations. (Before becoming the leader of Islamic Jihad, he served as an adjunct professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa.) He laughed when I asked about Mugniyah's current role in Hezbollah. "That's a name from history," he said, before summarily ending the conversation.

The Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri, told me that Mugniyah was not in his country. But in Lebanon it is rumored that Mugniyah sits on the eight-member ruling council of Hezbollah and that he is active under various names, including Jawad Nour-al-Din. Intelligence officials, while unsure—or unwilling to talk—about Mugniyah's day-to-day operations, believe that he is in charge of Hezbollah's worldwide network of cells. They also say that in recent years he has paid more attention to operations inside Israel. For instance, in 1996 a man whose passport identified him as Andrew Jonathan Neumann nearly killed himself when a bomb he was preparing in an East Jerusalem hotel detonated prematurely. Neumann, Israeli investigators learned, was a Lebanese Shiite named Hussein Mohammad Mikdad, who told the Israelis that he had been sent to Israel by Mugniyah to blow up a civilian airliner.

Mugniyah's name came up early this year during the Karine-A affair, in which a ship loaded with Iranian weapons intended for the Palestinian Authority was intercepted by Israel in the Red Sea. Intelligence officials believe that Mugniyah helped organize the shipment, which suggests that he has maintained contacts with Yasir Arafat, his original employer.

Terrorism experts say that Mugniyah's organization is hard to penetrate because it is in certain ways a family business. Many of the men under his command—there are thought to be several hundred—are from one of three Lebanese Shiite clans, one of which is his, and another that of a brother-in-law, Mustafa Badr-adeen. The men are trained in camps in the Bekaa Valley and Iran; intelligence sources told me that Mugniyah, in coöperation with Iran's Ministry of Intelligence, also has a base on the Iranian shore of the Caspian Sea, where his men are trained in SEAL-style operations. Although Mugniyah has concentrated on anti-Jewish activities, he is believed to have the capability to strike at America; his agents have conducted video surveillance of possible American targets in South America and Southeast Asia, and he is suspected of having established links with Al Qaeda. According to the testimony of Ali Mohamed, a former U.S. soldier who conspired in the Al Qaeda bombings of the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and who trained Osama bin Laden's security detail, Mugniyah met with bin Laden in Sudan in the mid-nineteen-nineties to discuss joint strategy. "Hezbollah provided explosives training for Al Qaeda and Al Jihad," he said. "Iran supplied Egyptian Islamic Jihad with weapons. Iran also used Hezbollah to supply explosives that were disguised to look like rocks."

Bush Administration officials have suggested that the United States will strike at Hezbollah in what some are calling "Phase Three" of the war on terror, and there is pressure within the government to settle accounts with Mugniyah. Any action taken against him, however, would almost certainly bring a Hezbollah response. After Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage declared, in September, that Hezbollah would eventually become an American target, the group's chief spokesman, Hassan Ezzeddin, issued a statement on Nasrallah's behalf. "The American administration will be held accountable for any offensive against Lebanon," the statement read, "and we emphasize that we are in full readiness to confront any eventuality and defend our people."

But others believe that Hezbollah might attack American interests regardless of American actions in Lebanon. "Any number of things could provoke Hezbollah," Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at the RAND Corporation, says. For example, Iran could activate Hezbollah terror cells to carry out attacks. The Iranians might do this, Hoffman and others say, if they felt threatened by America's anti-terror campaign. "We see our role as bringing stability, and in situations like Lebanon stability rewards the status quo," he told me. "Stability is anathema to a revolutionary movement like Hezbollah."

One intelligence official suggested that Iran sees Mugniyah's overseas network as a kind of life insurance. "If Iran becomes the focus of Phase Three, it could send a message to the U.S. that it is not like Iraq, that it has the means to strike us at home, with a network of cells that it placed here a long time ago," he said. "The Iranians wouldn't take credit for blowing up a McDonald's, but we would know, and they would know we know."

It is not unusual for the JR Tobacco warehouse in Statesville, North Carolina, to sell cigarettes in great quantities. Federal law allows a person to buy up to two hundred and ninety-nine cartons of cigarettes at one time, and few people in North Carolina, a tobacco-growing state, object. Still, in the mid-nineteen-nineties, when a group of olive-skinned men began visiting JR Tobacco, carrying shopping bags filled with cash and walking out with two hundred and ninety-nine cartons each, Bob Fromme, an off-duty detective with the Iredell County Sheriff's Office who was working as a security guard at the warehouse, found it worthy of note.

"I thought they were Mexicans at first," Fromme told me. "There was a group of six of them who would come in on a regular basis. They would go through the store, get the cigarettes, one guy would stand at the register, and each person would then get two hundred and ninety-nine cartons. The one guy would just keep paying for all of them." Fromme said he realized that these men were not speaking Spanish: "I knew soon enough that it was Arabic."

On his own time, Fromme began following the men, and trying to interest law-enforcement agencies in what he thought was a gang of cigarette smugglers. "I called the State Attorney General's office and told them what we had, but they didn't want the case," Fromme said. "The State Bureau of Investigation didn't want it, either."

But the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms opened an investigation, and brought Fromme into it. "In the spring of 1999, we were set to go, with searches and warrants and indictments," Fromme said. "Then the F.B.I. came and said, 'We're working these guys from a different angle. Give us everything you've got. We can't tell you what we're doing.' "

Fromme and the A.T.F. investigators soon learned what the F.B.I. knew: that the smugglers, led by a Lebanese immigrant, Mohamad Youssef Hammoud, were members of a Hezbollah cell in Charlotte, North Carolina, that in the course of a year and a half sold $7.9 million worth of cigarettes illegally in Michigan and sent some of the profits to Hezbollah in Lebanon. About a year after the F.B.I. entered the picture, ten members of the ring were arrested on racketeering charges. Eight of the ten pleaded guilty before going to trial; in June, a federal jury found Hammoud guilty of providing aid to a terrorist organization.

According to Kenneth Bell, the lead prosecutor, the case was built this way: Mohamad Hammoud ran a prayer meeting every Thursday—a meeting attended by Said Harb, a longtime friend of a man named Mohamad Hassan Dbouk. Dbouk was receiving instructions from Hassan Hilu Laqis, a Hezbollah official based in Lebanon, who was in charge of Hezbollah's North American procurement operation. A fax intercepted by Canadian intelligence suggested that Dbouk worked for Imad Mugniyah. In the fax, Dbouk "is assuring Laqis that he is doing everything he can" for Hezbollah, Bell told me. "At one point, he says that he is willing to do anything—and he says, 'I mean anything'—for someone they refer to as 'the father.' I believe 'the father' is a reference to Mugniyah." Dbouk was indicted in the North Carolina case, but he is now thought to be in Lebanon.

According to the indictment, Hezbollah officials in Lebanon asked the cell members in North America to buy such items as computers, night-vision equipment, mine-detection devices, global-positioning devices, and advanced aircraft-analysis software. Bell said he did not know how much of the equipment requested by Hezbollah was shipped to Lebanon. Wiretaps revealed that Hezbollah members discussed buying life-insurance policies for operatives who "might in a short period of time go for a 'walk' and 'never come back,' " the indictment reads.

The North Carolina operation is not the only Hezbollah cell to have been discovered in the United States. Asa Hutchinson, the director of the Drug Enforcement Administration, told me recently that his agents discovered a drug-trafficking ring in the Midwest that was sending some of its proceeds to Hezbollah.

There is no proof that the cells are capable of violent acts. But investigators in North Carolina found anti-American propaganda among the belongings of several of the cell members. "I believe that the structure was in place to carry out a command," the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, Bob Conrad, says. Among the items investigators found when they broke up the Charlotte group was a series of photographs taken in Washington, D.C. In one of them, a member of the cell stands in front of the Washington Monument, smiling. In another, two members are posing in front of the White House. ♦

(*This is the second part of a two-part article.*)

"I've thrown in some prescription drugs that don't interact well."

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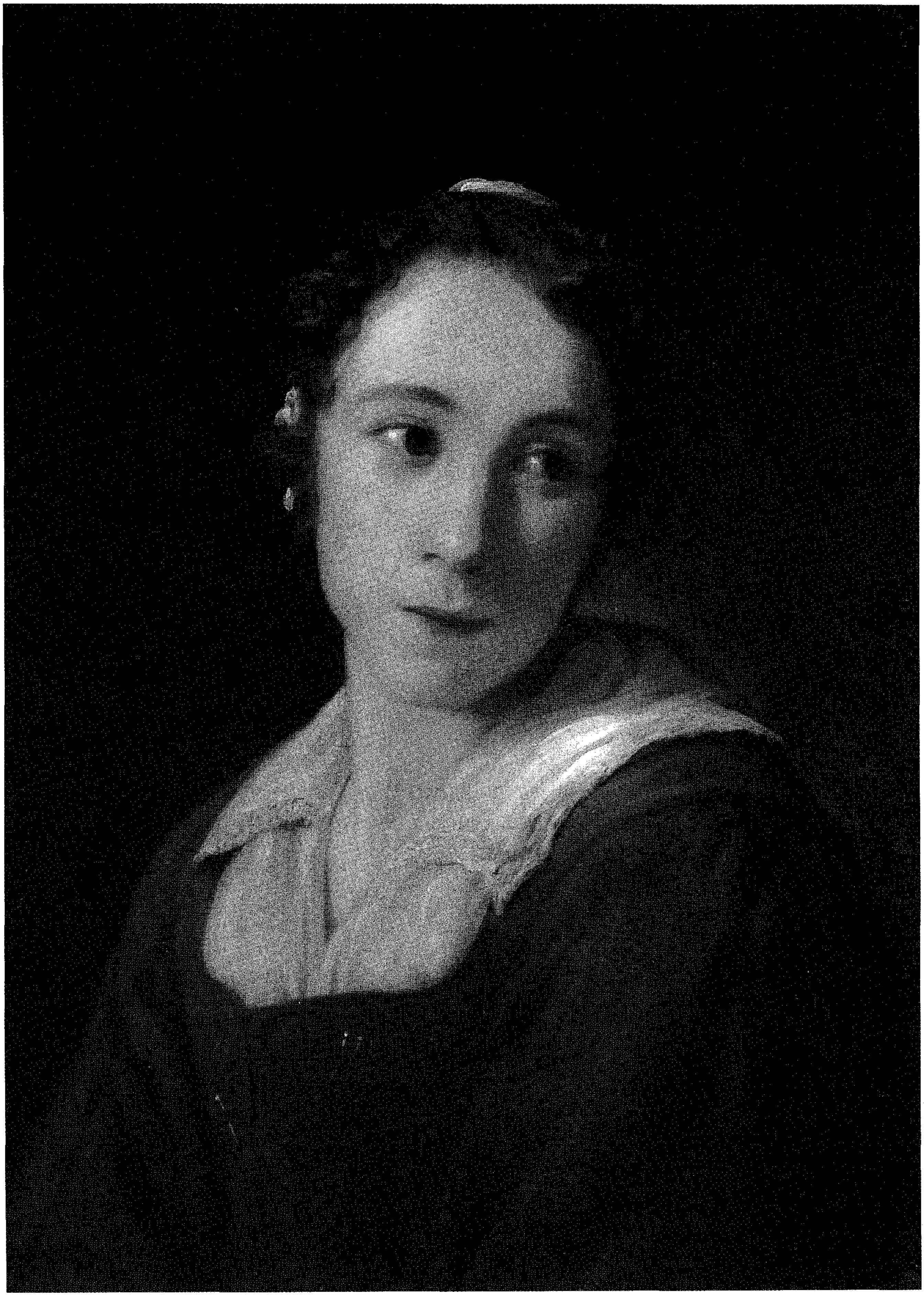


FOUNDATION AETAS AUREA, VADUZ, LIECHTENSTEIN; GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DI SAN LUCA, ROME

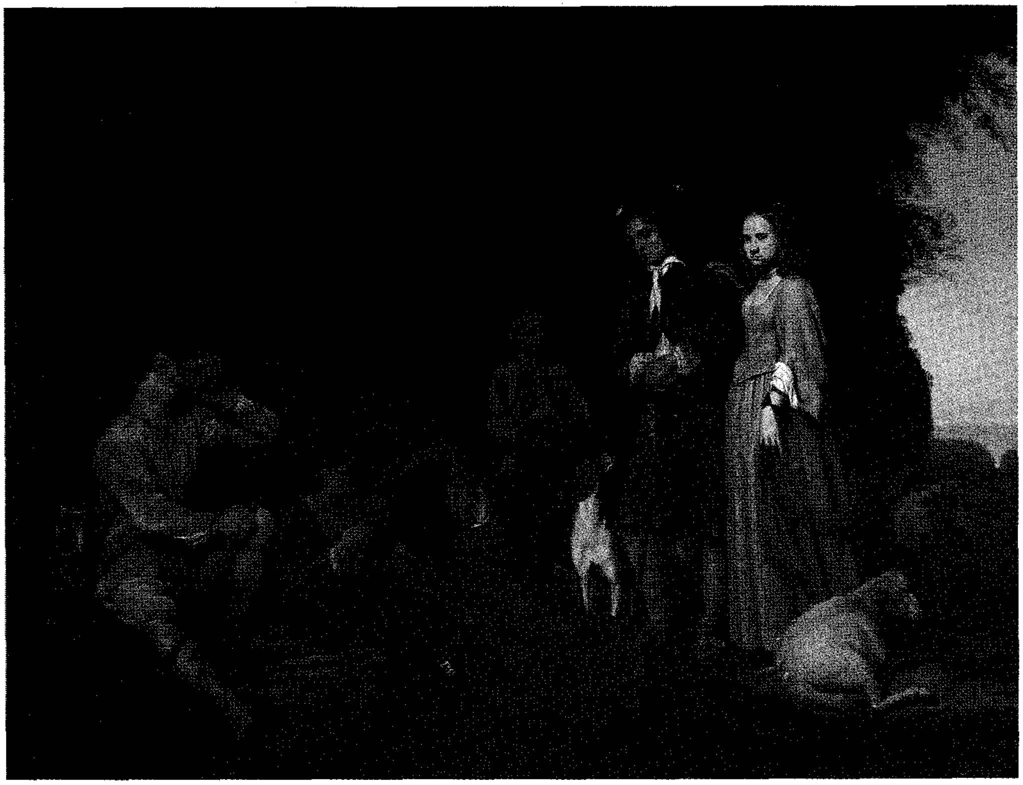
Michael Sweerts's "A Young Maidservant," ca. 1660. At right, "A Couple Visiting Shepherds in the Campagna," ca. 1648-50.

THE ART WORLD

ANOTHER DIMENSION

Michael Sweerts is one of the greatest artists of the seventeenth century. Who knew?

BY SIMON SCHAMA



In Calvinist Amsterdam in the summer of 1661, the Catholic painter Michael Sweerts began to exhibit signs of indiscreet fervor. He fasted, took Communion in hidden chapels, slept on hard floors, and gave away his portraiture fees to the poor. Sweerts was from Brussels, the son of a merchant. He had worked as an artist in Rome, bought paintings and antiquities for a rich Dutch family, and run a drawing academy in Brussels in the late sixteen-fifties. And at some point, according to the travel diary of a French missionary, he underwent a "miraculous conversion." While he was in Amsterdam, where he had gone to help prepare a ship for an evangelical mission to China, his devotions were intense. Gazing at the cross, he was vouchsafed "beautiful secrets." He appeared to be not only "one of the greatest painters in the world," the French missionary wrote, but a paragon of piety.

The Counter-Reformation was committed to mobilizing the senses in the work of salvation, and because the natives of Asia were thought to be particularly moved by spectacle, the Société des Missions Étrangères, which followed the teachings of the austere St. Vincent de Paul, wanted to include an artist among the lay missionaries it was sending to the East. (There would also be a musician to introduce the heathen to the sweet euphony of the faith, a sculptor to fashion images of the Saviour, and a surgeon to minister to the bodies of converts.) Sweerts must have seemed right for the appointment. He spoke seven languages and had seen enough of the world to know its perils and stratagems, although not so much as to compromise his faith.

But it was a long way to China. On the arduous sea voyage in the winter of 1661-62, four members of the small company died. The interminable and dangerous overland journey through Syria and Persia made for an even sterner test of humility and discipline. Somewhere amid the dun tracks of the Persian plateau, Michael Sweerts became obnoxiously counter-suggestible. He was, the missionaries reported, incapable of holding his tongue. Not even Bishop Pallu, the leader of the mission, was spared his bumptious homilies. Though much tried, Pallu was patient. Sweerts had painted his portrait and the Bishop liked it. So his initial reprimand was mild, far too mild for some.

Sweerts would recant and abjectly implore forgiveness after his outbursts, but, as the caravan plodded on, the loudmouth got louder. One of the missionaries, René Brunel, went to the Bishop and let him know that the mere presence of the obstreperous Sweerts had become more than the rest of them could tolerate, and somewhere between Isfahan and Tabriz in the summer of 1662, there was a parting of the ways. Michael Sweerts journeyed on to golden Goa, the Portuguese colony on the west coast of India. It was another citadel of faith, but one—and this cannot have been a coincidence—dominated by the theological adversaries of St. Vincent de Paul's Lazarists: the Jesuits. Between Tabriz and Goa, between the ascetic Lazarists and the imperious Jesuits, the documentary trail, never very clear in the case of Sweerts, peters out completely. We have no idea how the artist got to India, or whether he preached or painted after he arrived. We know only that he died there in 1664. He was forty-six.

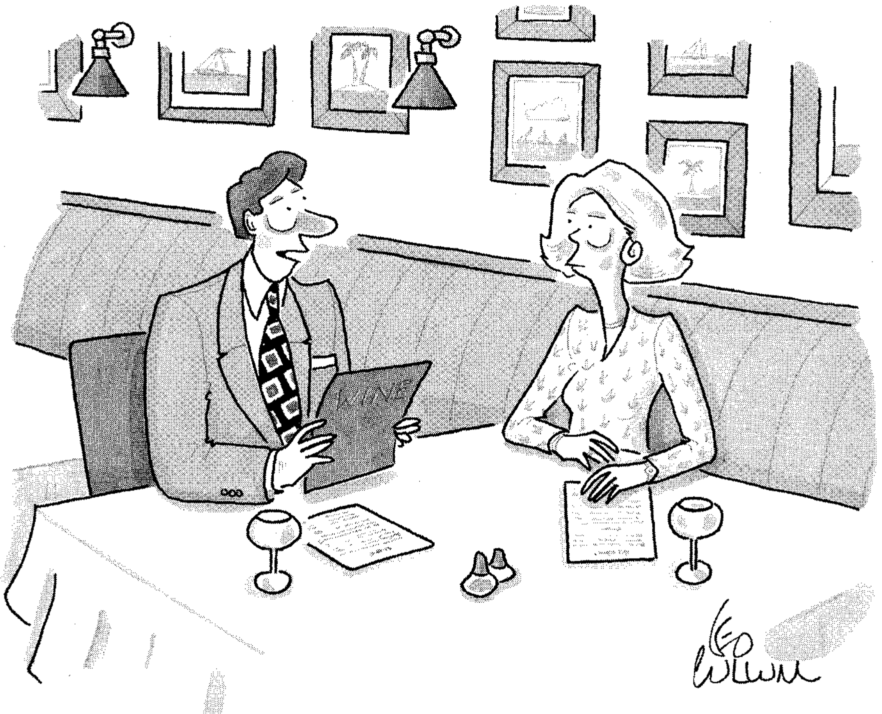
The first article on Michael Sweerts, disentangling him from the many other painters with whom he was confused, was published as long ago as 1907, but it is safe to say that he is still not exactly a household word, even among those few who, on entering a great museum, can't wait until they get to the Flemish Baroque. (Should you need a sit-down, it's a rule of thumb to look for galleries where rubicund boozers by Jacob Jordaens and eviscerated roebucks by Jan Fyt preside over imposing emptiness.) Sweerts has been a well-kept secret among Netherlandish art historians, dealers, and curators, surfacing in conferences or in seminar chatter as an unclassifiable, mercurial wonder who seemed to come from nowhere (with all due respect to Brussels) and to want to do everything.

The remarkable thing about this most protean of artists was that, technically, he *could* do almost everything. In the dazzling show of his work now at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford (a co-organizer of the exhibition, with the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco), you can find him serving up, with equal aplomb and confidence, a juicy Caravaggio street boy, all sharp blue silk and pouty come-hither lips; big-boned laborers with basketballer feet, chiselled into the same kind of dignified human monuments turned out by Velázquez (who was in Rome when Sweerts was, in the mid-sixteen-hundreds); a glossy little boy, the spitting image of Van Dyck's Stuart princes; and—in a moment of spectacular overreach—a plague scene meant to show Nicolas Poussin (whose "Plague at Ashdod" was famous in Rome then) just who could do cheese-colored corpses with rolled-up eyes and nose-holding citizens crouched in nauseated terror.

Having a go at Poussin was, of course, asking for trouble, and draftsmanship, Poussin's special genius, was not Sweerts's strong suit. But for aspiring seventeenth-century painters emulation was not merely allowable; it was expected. The rule since the Renaissance had been to learn by imitating the masters before you had the temerity to compete with them or the presumption to fashion your own *maniera.* Sweerts, his head spinning with the choice of available role models, living and dead (for he was plainly also drawn to Lorenzo Lotto and Annibale Carracci), often took emulation right to the edge of impersonation. The most brazen borrowing of all appears to be the portrait that is, literally, the poster boy for the Sweerts show: a dewy preadolescent youth in a beat-up brown slouch hat, a mane of auburn locks falling on his neck, calf eyes wide, his head swung over his right shoulder, the figure set in indeterminate depth and space to give it radiance and extraordinary immediacy. Goodness, you might say, he could even do Vermeer.

And you would be wrong. The disconcerting truth is that by the time Vermeer painted the "Girl with the Pearl Earring," sometime in the mid-sixteen-sixties, Michael Sweerts was either well east of Aleppo, lecturing his fellow-missionaries on their duties to Christ and man, or dead. If there is a link between the two paintings, it must have been Vermeer who emulated Sweerts, not the other way around. No evidence of any direct connection exists, but we know that Sweerts's paintings had reached Delft by the sixteen-sixties. And Vermeer's biographer, John Michael Montias, reminded me of one documented, indirect connection between the Delft master and Sweerts. In 1663, Vermeer received a visit from a French gentleman connoisseur, Balthasar de Monconys, whose travelling companion was a painter from Brussels, Louis Cousin. Sweerts and Cousin had been neighbors in Rome and both had worked for the Pamphilj, the family of Pope Innocent X. Cousin might well have discussed Sweerts with Vermeer.

Most of Sweerts's work is undated, frustrating the tidy habits of biographers who like their painters and paintings sorted into early, middle, and late periods. The heads that are some of the most poetically realized and singular paintings of the seventeenth century seem to come from late in his career, in the middle or late sixteen-fifties, either toward the end of his sojourn in Rome or after he returned to Brussels. Most of the Flemish and Dutch painters working in Italy at the time made money from servicing the vacation-in-the-Campagna



"I want Chardonnay, but I like saying 'Pinot Grigio.'"

market up north: slumbering cows, hunters and ruins, a good drenching in hot yellow light. But Sweerts was after something more ambitious than atmospherics. He wanted to marry the physical monumentality of great Italian art with the common humanity of the north, and the best paintings in the Hartford show achieve just that.

A maidservant in one gallery, neither especially pretty nor especially plain, turns her head over her left shoulder, away from our gaze. The rendering of her skin is a technical marvel on a par with Rembrandt's or Gerard ter Borch's greatest adventures in naturalism: rosy where it should be rosy; blue-shadowed between the bridge of the nose and the eyes. The shallow valley between the ridged tendons of her throat gets precisely the warm carnation tint it needs not just for anatomical naturalism but for expressive tenderness, as if the woman had been caught in some thoracic blush by the self-consciousness of posing. The eyes are, as always with Sweerts, enormous, the irises colored a strong hazel-green but with the paint thinned enough to describe, exactly, their vitreous transparency. No trick of the trade is neglected; the barely covered canvas weave helps create an illusion of the slightly granular, filmy surface of the cornea. Highlights work tonally rather than logically, the one on the collar at the girl's foreshortened left shoulder making a sharp contrast with the light shadow cast by the left side of her chin.

These calculations of what the seventeenth-century Dutch manuals called *houding*—the interlocking juxtaposition of cool and warm, light and dark passages of paint, to create illusions of three-dimensional modelling in space—are unerringly calibrated. Without the highlight, the progression of the shadow from pale to deep beneath the chin itself is lost. And without that deep shadow modulated to a more delicate shade along the left side of the face, the movement of the head away from us would be tentative rather than dynamic. Having managed all this art, Sweerts allows himself a little exclamation point of self-congratulation: the glittering pins fastened in the girl's bodice. Perhaps she is a seamstress. Sweerts often uses the conceit of stitching and embroidering as a metaphor for art, which—unlike many of his contemporaries—he does not want differentiated from craft.

Move along the wall and Sweerts does another quick change, but this time into a portrait manner completely unanticipated by any of his cynosures. The old—or perhaps not so old—duck with a bravely watery smile and painstakingly stitched patches depicted in "Head of an Old Woman," which belongs to the Getty, is neither a Rembrandtesque sympathy milker nor one of the grotesque hags of the Leonardo tradition nor a standard-issue procuress of the kind painted by Sweerts himself, all receding gums and beady-eyed predation. This woman is not, in fact, a persona—the mask of a type—but a person. Instead of doing what the hacks would do—offer the usual platitude about the loss of beauty—Sweerts actually observes beauty's sweetly lingering ghost. Washed by a light that is cooler and sharper than anything that would be used for portraiture until Ingres, the face was, clearly, not so very long ago, good-looking.

This one gallery in the Wadsworth demonstrates that it would be a gross mistake to write Sweerts off as a facile imitator, when he was capable, on occasion, of peerless inimitability. Another lissome youth, only recently identified as a Sweerts, is painted in precisely the opposite manner from the Getty picture: with free, loose, and fluid strokes, as if caught by a little gust of wind—the kind of sketchy plein-air manner that would be the rage a century later for milords ordering by the yard from Gainsborough or Fragonard.

The sense of Sweerts as a larger-than-life personality divided between a classically thoughtful temper and a spirited one is caught perfectly in the two big portraits hung at the beginning of the show. The painting of a classic melancholic—gaunt, pale, and pointing to a skull—has been published as a self-portrait, although the face doesn't much resemble that in other paintings which are more probably likenesses of Sweerts. But painters often featured themselves brooding on their own mortality—sometimes contrasted with the longevity of art, sometimes reinforcing its transience—and there is no doubt that Sweerts put a lot of himself into the study. The second big portrait at the beginning of the show is an even more stunning painting of a young man, this one from the collection of the Hermitage. It is a picture of genuinely solemn contemplation, akin to a metaphysical poem by George Herbert. The young man's head rests on his hand at a full forty-five degrees to his desk. Before him, painted with as exquisite a realization of surface and texture as anything achieved by Vermeer, are the materials of worldly fortune: commercial papers, a purse, a gleaming inkwell and quill (the translucence of the goose feather perfectly described). But those substantial things surrender to the conventional warning pinned to the tablecloth: "*Ratio quique reddenda*," each man must make a reckoning.

The pose of wistful reflection was sometimes just that, and sighing at the mirror could be dangerously close to narcissism. Sweerts may have painted sadness, sometimes more feelingly than any of his contemporaries, but it is less clear that he suffered from it. The two generally accepted self-portraits we have of him convey a sense of burly self-confidence. The earlier one (which is in the Uffizi and has not been included in this show) probably dates from the late sixteen-forties and is painted with such thickly applied Rembrandtesque coarseness that it reminds us how well known the Dutch master was in Italy. But the big self-portrait from the late sixteen-fifties that dominates the gallery in Hartford is sui generis. This is Sweerts, the genial colossus, posed against the distant blue horizon of an Italian landscape, as though the painter's feet were planted on the foothills of Parnassus. He holds a loaded brush in one hand and, in the other, a palette with the paints arranged in standard order, from warm vermillion to sienna and black. Beads of pigment are deposited to represent beads of pigment. (Ceci *est* une pipe.) Painters depicting themselves with the tools of their trade had a long pedigree, especially in the Netherlands, but a landscape setting for such working self-portraits did not. The most obvious precedent was the self-portrait of another artist who worked in Rome when Sweerts did and who had a richly merited reputation for cranky individualism: Salvator Rosa.

Art historians like to correct romantic fantasies about great art issuing from the visions of a few sublimely inspired Prometheans. Masters, along with masterpieces, are now just so many bourgeois fetishes in the moribund temples of decayed capitalism. Quality is ideology. Instead of the breathless hush and the deathless genius, we have image and sign, in no meaningful sense separate from a welter of other images in social circulation—Renaissance helmet decorations, rococo snuffboxes, tobacco-store Indians, movie posters, subway graffiti. The images are said to be the products of the market, the critical Zeitgeist, the patron-painter-public nexus, or—in traditional art-historical literature—just another link in a long chain of predecessors, prototypes, and role models. In the case of figures like Rosa and Sweerts, who seem to stand apart from, or at least to one side of, the herd, the finger-wagging against anachronistic cults of the solitary artist-hero gets frantic.

But we know that Salvator Rosa did indeed think of himself as a maverick hero. The romantic idea of the artist in combat with vulgar patrons and dim-witted critics begins with Rosa, right in the middle of the seventeenth century. (Visitors to the Sweerts show at the Wadsworth Atheneum can find one of Rosa's strongest displays of visual histrionics, "Lucrezia as the Personification of Poetry," in a downstairs gallery.) Rosa fancied himself a satirical poet and a classical scholar as well as a painter and engraver, and he despised the powerful. One of his best etchings is of Diogenes telling Alexander the Great to get out of his light. To avoid contractual captivity, Rosa sold his pictures at public exhibitions. And his style was of a piece with his uncompromising personality: whiplash lines; hurricane hairdos; cavalry horses caught in spine-bending twists; errant boys lost amid sylvan fronds; mossily crumbled bridges; overhanging precipices; skies with an attitude; cavernous lairs prowled by brigands. His stagy convulsions were the antithesis of what orderly academic classicism demanded.

The fact that Rosa paraded his erudition made his calculated unruliness even more irksome to the guardians of classical decorum. One of his etchings, called, with characteristic self-effacement, "The Genius of Salvator Rosa," features the hero in the attitude of a river god, crowned with a wreath of ivy and about to receive the cap of Liberty. For the first time (that I know of), the equation between art and freedom has become a manifesto. Rosa's self-portrait now in the National Gallery in London is surely a prototype for Sweerts. There, too, the genius is stationed colossally in indeterminate space and depth, as if communing with the muses. He holds a philosophical inscription that reads, in Latin, "Keep silent unless your speech is better than silence."

Which is not to say that, even though Rosa's fierce star exercised a powerful influence in mid-seventeenth-century Rome, the bright young merchant's son from Brussels intended to cast himself in a similar role. While Rosa's face glares from his self-portrait, Sweerts paints himself all innocent self-satisfaction. Far from spurning patrons, Sweerts likely courted them. In Rome, he acted as a purchasing agent for the wealthy Deutz brothers, the portraits of two of whom appear at the Wadsworth Atheneum, their elegantly understated patrician uniforms surmounted by pudding heads and wetly glittering bug eyes. And Sweerts worked for the nephew of Pope Innocent X, Prince Camillo Pamphilj. In a city bursting with outsized talent—Bernini, Borromini, Velázquez, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Gaspar Dughet, and the elderly Pietro da Cortona—Sweerts had, by 1652, become an eminence in his own right, enough of one, at any rate, for the famously irascible Pope to have raised him to the rank of *cavaliere*, which Rubens and Van Dyck had also held.

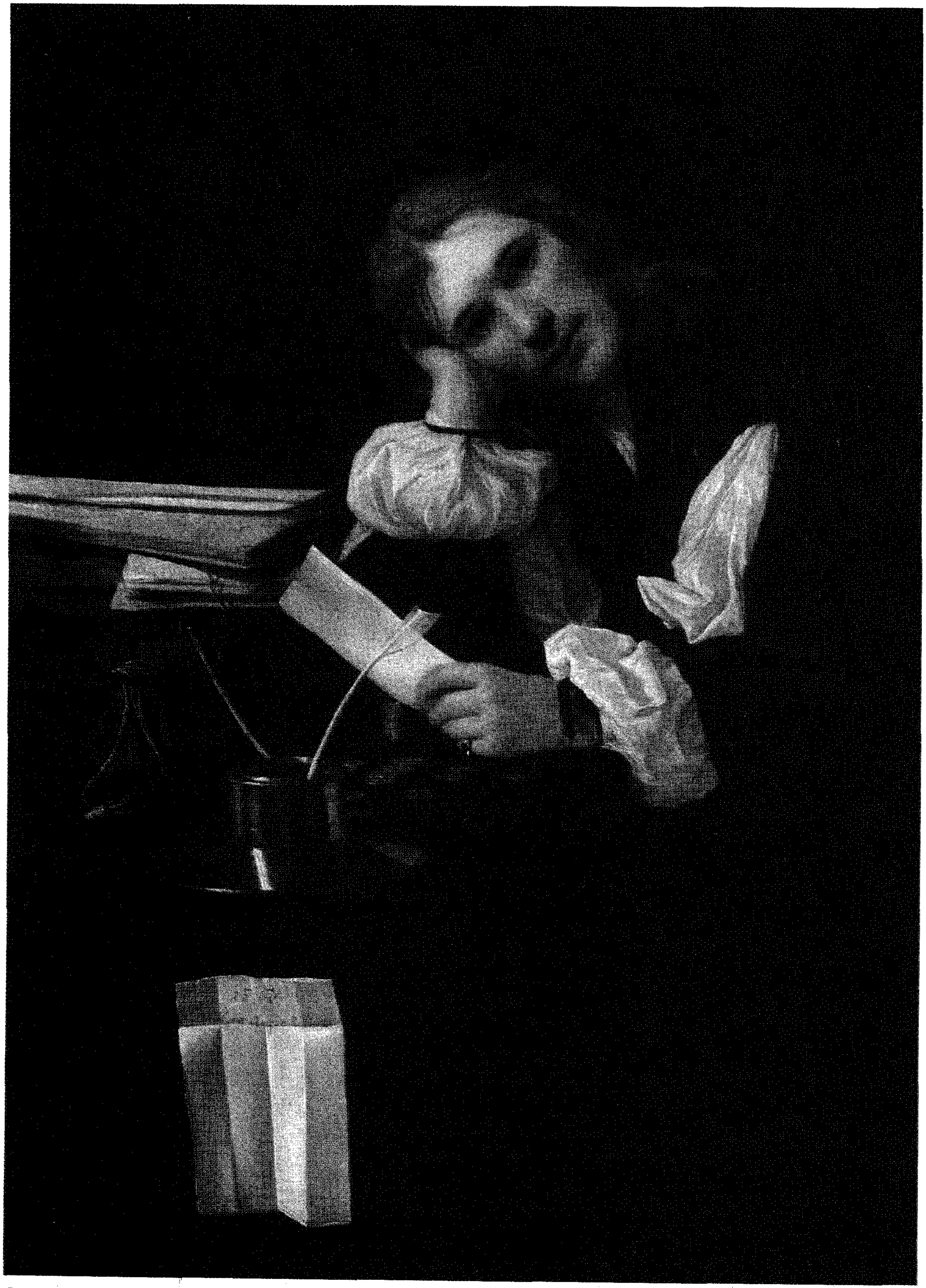
Sweerts was no rebel, but he wasn't much of a joiner, either. Though he lived in the Via Margutta, in the rowdy Santa Maria del Popolo quarter of Rome, where Dutch and Flemish artists congregated, he seems not to have become a regular among the roistering gang of the *Bentvueghels* ("birds of a feather," as the northerners called themselves). Nor was he likely a member of the Accademia di San Luca, an artists' guild. He was not the enemy of the academies, or of their curriculum, which demanded for the highest vocation—history painting—training grounded in *disegno*, or the drawing of antique sculpture, usually in the form of widely available plaster casts. But the internal evidence of his off-kilter paintings depicting artists and apprentices drawing suggests a fascinating ambivalence about those very practices. Why, for example, is the most brilliantly lit young apprentice in the foreground of "The Drawing School" the only figure looking neither at the male model nor at his sketch pad but, rather, at something or someone beyond the frame?

In the seventeenth century, the making of art was argued about intensely. Was painting an art because of its closeness to observed nature or its distance from it? Was it a straightforward report or a refined editorial? Was it to be earthy or erudite, philosophical or social? Was the instrument of its transport color or the drawn line? By the time Sweerts showed up in Rome, these debates were hoary, but the status of the painter was still at stake. Was he an artist—and in both Italian and Dutch the word itself, *arte* or *kunst*, meant skilled craft, not aesthetic practice—because of his intellectual grasp or the finesse of his hands?

Sweerts went out of his way to confound the cliché that Flemish painters were amusingly mindless craftsmen. He embraced *disegno* rather than *colore*, and painted artists in the process of drawing. But he had not so much made a choice as refused to make one. All he asks is that we look hard and think as we look. It's easy to miss this sly thoughtfulness in the apparently anecdotal gatherings that populate the busy paintings of wrestlers and bathers as well as those of sketchers and embroiderers. The show in Hartford dumps the pictures into the category of "genre painting," a slightly tired category for slices of life, street or domestic, comic or serious, that make no strenuous demands on the beholder. And in one nice little number, a painting of a Dutch patrician having his riding boots pulled off by a manservant, Sweerts shows that he is not above this.

Superficially, some of the other work in the show—a painting of an artist sketching Bernini's "Neptune and Triton," for instance, and one of a well-dressed man and woman slumming with a group of off-duty shepherds—seems to be no more than visual eavesdropping. Yet neither of these pictures makes the slightest sense as a social document. The first painting is abruptly and unequally divided. On the left side, beneath one of Sweerts's brilliant cerulean skies, Bernini's youthful, breakthrough sculpture (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London) stands in an imaginary Roman street. But scowling Neptune, plowing the sea, could not have been less like the models of classical re-

STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



Most of Sweerts's work is not dated, but "Portrait of a Young Man" is signed and dated 1656, not long after the artist left Rome.

straint recommended by the academy. The painting's gravitas is embodied in a group of workers standing around in the foreground, oblivious of the artist's efforts. A knife grinder and a cleaver-toting butcher are in deep shadow, the details of the figures not worked up. Some faces are no more than monochrome smears. Thus far, Sweerts's intention is clear. He has put aside the pretensions of the artist as a *pictor doctus*, a learned painter following the rules of drawing, and is aligned with the workers. But—and it turns out to be a big but—the most strongly lit figure in the painting is a bearded, heavily muscled, half-naked man, recumbent against what seems to be felled logs, fallen columns, or both. He gazes raptly past the seated artist at Bernini's sculpture group. Half submerged amid the debris, he is either Lazarus awakening to the power of art or a reclining river god who belongs with the marble figures glowing in the late-afternoon light. Sweerts, perhaps for the first time, but not the last, is playing Pygmalion.

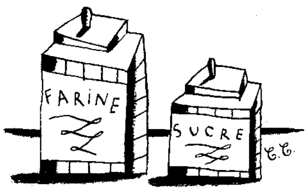
The painting of the well-heeled couple's encounter with the shepherds is even odder. It is one of the few seventeenth-century paintings where sophisticated patrons for whom the pastoral was a polite game—poetry to be written and recited, cantatas to be sung, dress-up picnics to be taken in the Campagna or the northern meadows—are actually confronted with the physical reality behind the Arcadian fantasy: solid, dirty, hairy men unimpressed by their visitors. A shepherd taking a slug from a flask, his legs parted, feet bare, eyes the couple. The uneasy husband folds his hands together and looks down at a mustachioed figure whose features are not dissimilar from Sweerts's own, while his wife, her right hand on his shoulder, stares sourly at us, implicating us in the trespass. It is possible that this extraordinary subversion of the usual pastoral-dress paintings of the aristocracy was nonetheless commissioned, and even possible that the patrons failed to notice the ominous collision of social unequals. Yet it is unmistakably there.

This sort of thing was not what Netherlandish artists in Rome were known for. A decade before Sweerts arrived in the city, the Bamboccianti—the followers of Pieter van Laer, nicknamed Il Bamboccio, or the "crooked doll," because of a deformity that made him resemble a commedia-dell'arte figure—had begun turning out innocuously profane wall candy. In a gallery adjoining the Sweerts show, the Wadsworth Atheneum has helpfully installed a selection from its own collection of mid-seventeenth-century Roman paintings, including a number painted by the Bamboccianti. There is a schlock-horror self-portrait by van Laer of the artist as alchemist. A potion simmers in a skull; a paper on which a drawing of a heart has been rent by a knife lies to one side; and, at the right of the frame, a wicked set of demonic talons reach for the throat of the alchemist, whose eyes start from their sockets, his mouth frozen in a terrorized O.

Van Laer more often produced picaresque scenes of the street life around the Piazza del Popolo and the Piazza di Spagna. His acolytes, such as Jan Miel, Andries Both, and Johannes Lingelbach, extended their repertoire to street singers, carnivals, beggars, and *baroni*—the vagabond petty criminals and roughnecks of the back alleys and the countryside. The Bamboccianti were said to have "opened a window onto the world," or "pictured the unadorned truth"—another way of saying that they were concerned with picturesque observation of the lowest kind of subject matter.

Italian patrons and critics had not always seen Netherlandish art this way. In the fifteenth century, no painters were more admired and coveted in Italy than Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden. Their work, not least because of the brilliance of oil-based pigments, was thought to join miraculous naturalism with tender Christian devotion. The Medici bank in Bruges spread its buying net so widely that by the end of the century more than a third of the entire Medici collection consisted of Netherlandish paintings. Florentines like Botticelli were acutely conscious that their efforts would be measured against the supremacy of the northerners.

But by the middle of the sixteenth century the northerners were sneered at rather than envied. Michelangelo commented that Netherlandish painting was hardly more than an accumulation of details: "bricks and mortar, the grass of the fields, the shadows of trees . . . and little figures here and there." It seemed essentially artisanal: an extension of the brilliant color trades at which the northerners were still unquestionably dazzling—textiles, tapestry, jewelry. History painting, by contrast, was imbued with poetry and classical philosophy.



Flemish and Dutch artists who crossed the Alps early in the seventeenth century—Rubens, Van Dyck, and Rembrandt's teacher, Pieter Lastman—wanted to drink at the well of classicism so that they would qualify as history painters. Some of them, of course, became bewitched by the electrifying carnality of Caravaggio. Others discovered that sending home landscapes glowing with the apricot light of the countryside would find a ready clientele. And then there were the Bamboccianti, who worked the stereotype of anecdotal low life for all it was worth.

Nothing like a true Bamboccio picture by Sweerts's hand survives. Whenever he turned to street scenes, the action slowed; the figures became weightier and more monumental. Sweerts may have lived with the clowns, but he had his sights set on the grandest patrons, like the Pamphilj, and he ran with the scholars. There must have come a time, though, when the choice between marble and plaster on the one hand and the common clay of humanity on the other was a choice he did not want to make. He may even have thought it a false dichotomy. In any case, he began to muddle the genres. Living flesh—wrestlers and bathers; the reclining Lazarus/river god—took on the quality of heroic statuary, while plaster casts began to come alive. Some of these role reversals are winningly perverse. Rampaging Mars, the unhinged destroyer of the arts, wears what has been thought to be the face of Sweerts, but the body and head on which he tramples—that of the Laocoön, the antique statue that epitomized physical torment—remains a mask of pain. In the ostensibly straightforward painting from the Rijksmuseum of an artist's studio, with apprentices sketching from both live models and plaster casts, the human figures are summarily blocked in, the kneeling nude model painted in almost caricatural two dimensions, as though it had stepped from a Greek vase or a Roman frieze. The plaster cast of a flayed man, by contrast, seems alarmingly alive, as though all that exposed musculature were about to flex. In the foreground, brilliantly lit casts of the faces of an old woman, of Juno, and of a grieving Niobid express intense passions amid a pile of shattered torsos and heads and a single, unidentifiable bone from an arm or a leg.

Sweerts knew exactly what he was doing. Others had invested the commonplace with the dignity of the classical: Caravaggio and Velázquez and, perhaps, the Le Nain brothers in France, although their images of simple artisans and peasants are coated with a kind of docile sweetness that Sweerts avoided. But at some point this exercise became more than just a smart game for Sweerts and turned into a profession of faith. That point was reached when he painted "The Seven Acts of Mercy," one per picture, which are reunited for the first time since they hung together in the grand Amsterdam canal house of the Deutz family.

"Geese fly in a V, son—attorneys fly in a wedge."

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The "miraculous conversion" that the French missionary spoke of could have occurred had Sweerts read "The Contentment of Poverty" ("La Povertà Contenta"), published in Rome in 1650 by the Jesuit Daniello Bartoli. It reiterated conventional pieties—for example, that, unlike the rich, who are constantly harrowed by their sinfulness and pride, the poor are content, because owning nothing they risk nothing, and because the temptations and transgressions of the wealthy are beyond them. Bartoli's tract appeared at the same time that Salvator Rosa, the Diogenes of papal Rome, was attacking paintings that showed works of charity, calling them cheap salves for the conscience of the rich.

Rosa undoubtedly had in mind those works-of-mercy pictures that complacently showed the rich and the righteous clothing the naked, feeding the famished, and performing other obligations listed in Chapter 25 of the Gospel According to St. Matthew. But Sweerts's vision is shockingly different. In "The Seven Acts of Mercy," those who give and those who receive are socially indistinguishable. Authority is present, but stands heartlessly—pharisaically, one thinks—apart from the Christian drama (and typically is sketched in unfinished dead-color monochrome). A physician delivers cold comfort to the stricken by pointing to Heaven as the only remaining source of salvation, while a child, his face distorted by tears, exposes his pain to the beholder. A stove-hatted lawyer, dehumanized by being seen from the back, gestures self-importantly at unfortunates squatting on a prison floor. True mercy is delivered by the poor to the poorer. In the prison scene—perhaps the most elementally pathetic of the series—a half-clothed, dramatically lit man of great beauty and sanctity, his own feet chained, ministers to an old man, also in shackles, wearing heavily patched breeches and a shabby coat. The succoring figure lowers his head to the old man and rests one hand on his shoulder. But the old man does not respond. He stares dead ahead, his jaw set. He is either blind or indifferent. This moment of compassion blunted by hopelessness is unlike any other passage I know in Baroque painting.

In "Harboring the Stranger," a homely figure with a string around his coat directs a pilgrim toward the courtyard of an inn. It has been suggested that the pilgrim is the risen Christ, arriving at Emmaus. This may or may not be right, but it is certainly unimportant, compared with the startling insertion of a third figure or, rather, a third face (for the half-hidden body is strangely unreadable and appears to have no legs at all), lurking between the pilgrim and his kindly guide. That face belongs to the young Michael Sweerts. The principals of the grave little drama pay him no heed whatsoever. Sweerts's paintings are full of figures—clothed men among the naked, allegorical seamstresses amid urchins—who seem to have strayed onto the scene from another dimension. Here the painter himself is invisible to his creations because he is the phantom of our conscience. His business, as the direction of his gaze makes clear, is with us. Sweerts has already become a missionary.

No one should go to Hartford expecting to see another Vermeer, although those who do go—and if there is any justice in the world, there should be traffic jams on I-84—will discover an artist versatile and gifted enough to have been the clone of anyone from Caravaggio to Van Dyck or ter Borch. But Sweerts chose instead to be his singular self. And that was the real miracle. ♦

OCTOBER

I.
Is it winter again, is it cold again,
didn't Frank just slip on the ice,
didn't he heal, weren't the spring seeds planted

didn't the night end,
didn't the melting ice
flood the narrow gutters

wasn't my body
rescued, wasn't it safe

didn't the scar form, invisible
above the injury

terror and cold,
didn't they just end, wasn't the back garden
harrowed and planted—

I remember how the earth felt, red and dense,
in stiff rows, weren't the seeds planted,
didn't vines climb the south wall

I can't hear your voice
for the wind's cries, whistling over the bare ground

I no longer care
what sound it makes

when was I silenced, when did it first seem
pointless to describe that sound

what it sounds like can't change what it is—

didn't the night end, wasn't the earth
safe when it was planted

didn't we plant the seeds,
weren't we necessary to the earth,

the vines, were they harvested?

II.
Summer after summer has ended,
balm after violence:
it does me no good
to be good to me now;
violence has changed me.

Daybreak. The low hills shine
ochre and fire, even the fields shine.
I know what I see: sun that could be
the August sun, returning
everything that was taken away—

You hear this voice? This is my mind's voice;
you can't touch my body now.
It has changed once, it has hardened,
don't ask it to respond again.

A day like a day in summer.
Exceptionally still. The long shadows of the maples
nearly mauve on the gravel paths.
And in the evening, warmth. Night like a night in summer.

It does me no good; violence has changed me.
My body has grown cold like the stripped fields;
now there is only my mind, cautious and wary,
with the sense it is being tested.

Once more, the sun rises as it rose in summer;
bounty, balm after violence.
Balm after the leaves have changed, after the fields
have been harvested and turned.

Tell me this is the future,
I won't believe you.
Tell me I'm living,
I won't believe you.

III.
Snow had fallen. I remember
music from an open window.

Come to me, said the world.
This is not to say
it spoke in exact sentences
but that I perceived beauty in this manner.

Sunrise. A film of moisture
on each living thing. Pools of cold light
formed in the gutters.

I stood
at the doorway,
ridiculous as it now seems.

What others found in art,
I found in nature. What others found
in human love, I found in nature.
Very simple. But there was no voice there.

Winter was over. In the thawed dirt,
bits of green were showing.

Come to me, said the world. I was standing
in my wool coat at a kind of bright portal—
I can finally say
long ago; it gives me considerable pleasure. Beauty

the healer, the teacher—

death cannot harm me
more than you have harmed me,
my beloved life.

IV.
The light has changed;
middle C is tuned darker now.
And the songs of morning sound over-rehearsed.

This is the light of autumn, not the light of spring.
The light of autumn: *you will not be spared.*

The songs have changed; the unspeakable
has entered them.

This is the light of autumn, not the light that says
I am reborn.

Not the spring dawn: *I strained, I suffered, I was delivered.*
This is the present, an allegory of waste.

So much has changed. And still, you are fortunate:
the ideal burns in you like a fever.
Or not like a fever, like a second heart.

The songs have changed, but really they are still quite beautiful.
They have been concentrated in a smaller space, the space of the mind.
They are dark, now, with desolation and anguish.

And yet the notes recur. They hover oddly
in anticipation of silence.
The ear gets used to them.
The eye gets used to disappearances.

You will not be spared, nor will what you love be spared.

A wind has come and gone, taking apart the mind;
it has left in its wake a strange lucidity.

How privileged you are, to be still passionately
clinging to what you love;
the forfeit of hope has not destroyed you.

Maestoso, doloroso:

This is the light of autumn; it has turned on us.
Surely it is a privilege to approach the end
still believing in something.

V.
It is true there is not enough beauty in the world.
It is also true that I am not competent to restore it.
Neither is there candor, and here I may be of some use.

I am
at work, though I am silent.

The bland

misery of the world
bounds us on either side, an alley

lined with trees; we are
companions here, not speaking,
each with his own thoughts;

behind the trees, iron
gates of the private houses,
the shuttered rooms

somehow deserted, abandoned,

as though it were the artist's
duty to create
hope, but out of what? what?

the word itself
false, a device to refute
perception— At the intersection,

ornamental lights of the season.

I was young here. Riding
the subway with my small book
as though to defend myself against

this same world:

you are not alone,
the poem said,
in the dark tunnel.

VI.
The brightness of the day becomes
the brightness of the night;
the fire becomes the mirror.

My friend the earth is bitter; I think
sunlight has failed her.
Bitter or weary, it is hard to say.

Between herself and the sun,
something has ended.
She wants, now, to be left alone;
I think we must give up
turning to her for affirmation.

Above the fields,
above the roofs of the village houses,
the brilliance that made all life possible
becomes the cold stars.

Lie still and watch:
they give nothing but ask nothing.

From within the earth's
bitter disgrace, coldness and barrenness

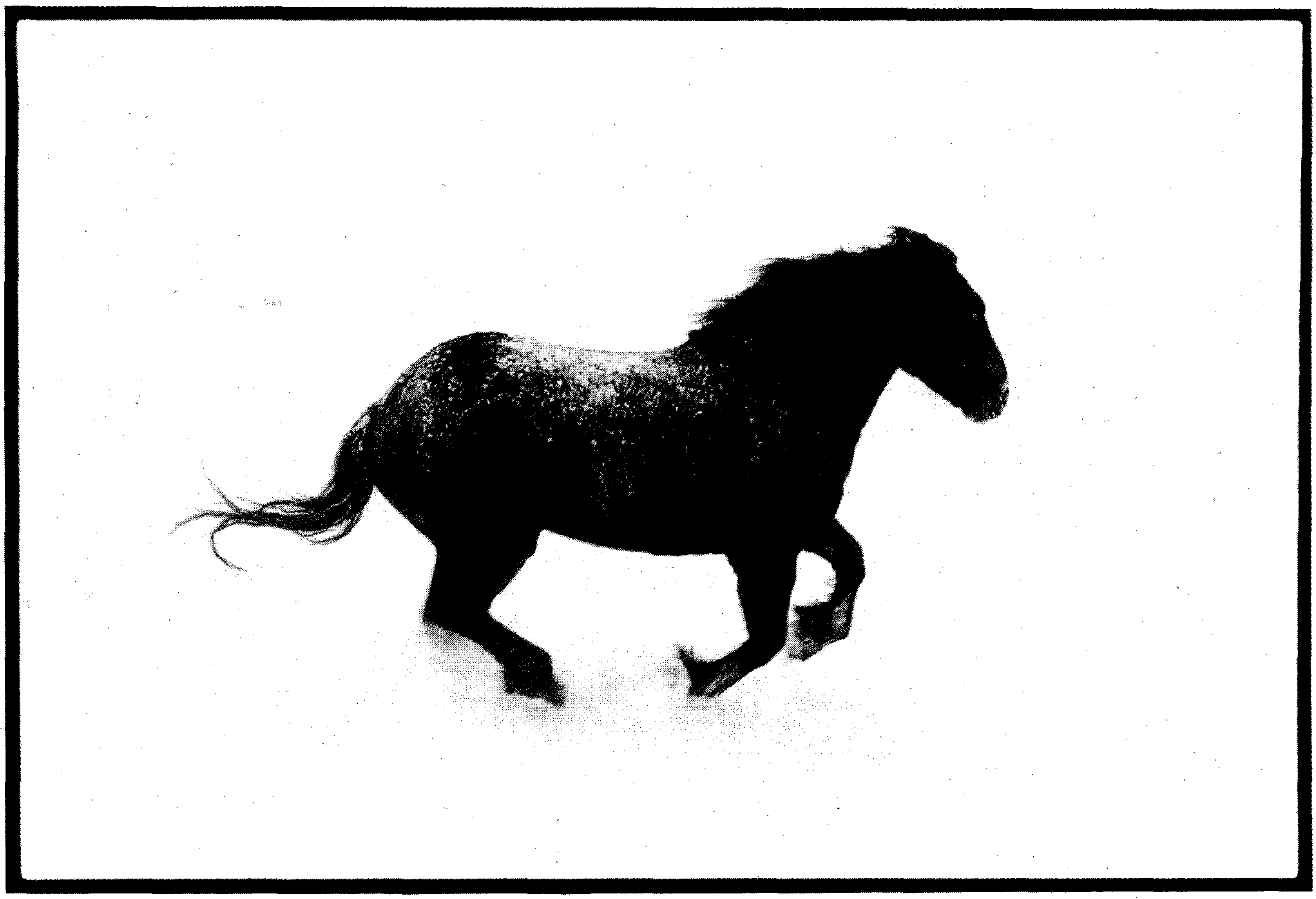
my friend the moon rises:
she is beautiful tonight, but when is she not beautiful?

—Louise Glück

FICTION

TRAVIS, B.

BY MAILE MELOY



CLAUDIO CAMBON, "GHOST HORSE, SPRING BLIZZARD" (2000)/PHOTOEYE.COM

Chet Moran grew up in Logan, Montana, at a time when kids weren't supposed to get polio anymore. In Logan they still did, and he had it before he was two. He recovered, but his right hip never fit in the socket, and his mother always thought he would die young.

When he was fourteen, he started riding spoiled and unbroke horses to prove to her that he was invincible, and they bucked and kicked and piled up on him. He developed a theory that horses didn't kick or shy because they were wild; they kicked because for millions of years they'd had the instinct to move fast or be lion meat.

"You mean because they're wild," his father had said, when Chet advanced this theory.

He couldn't explain, but he thought his father was wrong. There was a difference, and what people meant when they called a thing "wild" was not what he saw in the green horses at all.

He was small and wiry, but his hip made it hard for him to scramble out from under the horses, and by the time he was eighteen he had broken his right kneecap, his right foot, and his left femur. His father drove him to Great Falls, where the doctors put a steel rod in his good leg from hip to knee. From then on, he walked as though he were turning to himself to ask a question.

His size came from his mother, who was three-quarters Cheyenne; his father was Irish and bullheaded. They had vague dreams of improvement for their sons, but no ideas about how to achieve them. His older brother joined the Army. Watching him board an eastbound train, handsome and straight-limbed in his uniform, Chet wondered why God or fate had favored his brother. Why had the cards been so unevenly dealt?

He left home at twenty, and moved up north to the highline. He took a job outside Havre feeding cows through the winter, while the rancher's family lived in town and the kids went to school. When the roads were clear, he rode to the nearest neighbors' for a game of pinochle, but mostly he was snowed in and alone. He had plenty of food, and good TV reception. He had some girlie magazines that he got to know better than he'd ever known an actual person. He fed the cows with a team and sled, and dragged the sick or injured ones back to the barn on a rope. He spent his twenty-first birthday wearing long johns under two flannel shirts, his winter coat, and the rancher's big oilskin, with his feet on the space heater, warming up soup on the stove. But he got afraid of himself that winter; he sensed something dangerous that would break free if he kept so much alone.

In the spring, he got a job in Billings, in an office with friendly secretaries and coffee breaks spent talking about rodeos and sports. They liked him there, and offered to send him to the main office in Chicago. He went home to his rented room and walked around on his stiff hip and guessed he'd be stove up in a wheelchair in three years if he kept sitting around an office. He quit the job and bucked bales all summer, for hardly any money, and the pain went out of his hip, unless he stepped wrong.

That winter, he took another feeding job, outside Glendive, on the North Dakota border. If he went east instead of north, he thought, there might not be so much snow. He lived in an insulated room built into the barn, with a TV, a couch, a hot plate, and an icebox. He bought some new magazines, in which the girls were strangers to him, and watched "Starsky & Hutch" and the local news. At night, he could hear the horses moving in their stalls. But he'd been wrong about the snow; by October it had already started. He made it through Christmas, with packages and letters from his mother, but by January he got afraid of himself again. The fear was not particular at all. It began as a buzzing feeling around his spinal cord, a restlessness without aim.

The rancher had left him a truck, with a headbolt heater on an extension cord, and he warmed it up one night and drove the snowy road into town. The café was open, but he wasn't hungry. The stores were closed. The gas pumps stood in an island of bluish light. He turned off the main street to loop through town, and he drove by the school. A light was on at a side door and people were leaving their cars in the lot and going inside. He slowed, parked on the street, and watched them. He ran a hand around the steering wheel and tugged at a loose thread on its worn leather grip. Finally, he got out of the truck, turned his collar up against the cold, and followed the people inside.

One classroom had its lights on, and the people were sitting in the too small desks, saying hello as if they all knew each other. Construction-paper signs and pictures covered the walls, and the cursive alphabet ran along the top of the chalkboard. Most of the people were about his parents' age, though their faces were softer, and they dressed as though they lived in town, in thin shoes and clean bright jackets. He went to the back and took a seat. He left his coat on, a big old sheepskin-lined denim, and checked his boots to see what he might have dragged in, but they were clean from walking through snow.

"We should have gotten a high-school room," one of the men said.

A lady—a girl—stood at the teacher's desk, at the front. She had curly light-colored hair and wore a gray wool skirt and a blue sweater, and glasses with wire rims. She hung her red down coat over the teacher's chair, and took some papers from a briefcase. She was thin, and looked tired and nervous. Everyone grew quiet, and waited for her to speak.

"I've never done this before," she said. "I'm not sure how to start. Do you want to introduce yourselves?"

"We all know each other," a gray-haired woman said.

"Well, she doesn't," another woman protested.

"You could tell me what you know about school law," the young teacher said.

The adults in the small desks looked at each other. "I don't think we know anything," someone said.

"That's why we're here."

The girl looked helpless for a second and then turned to the chalkboard. Her bottom was a smooth curve in the wool skirt. She wrote "Adult Ed 302" and her name, Beth Travis, and the chalk squeaked on the "*h*" and the "*r*." The men and women grimaced.

"If you hold it straight up," an older woman said, demonstrating with a pencil, "with your thumb along the side, it won't do that."

Beth Travis blushed and changed her grip and began to talk about state and federal law as it applied to the public-school system. Chet found a pencil in his desk and held it the way the woman had said to hold the chalk. He wondered why no one had ever showed him that in his school days.

The class took notes, and he sat in the back and listened. Beth Travis was a lawyer, it seemed. Chet's father told jokes about lawyers, but the lawyers were never girls. The class was full of teachers, and they asked about students' rights and parents' rights. He'd never imagined that a student had any rights. His mother had grown up in the mission school in St. Xavier, where the Indian kids were beaten for not speaking English. He'd been luckier. An English teacher had once struck him on the head with a dictionary, and a math teacher had splintered a yardstick on his desk. But in general they had been no trouble.

Once, Beth Travis seemed about to ask him something, but one of the teachers raised a hand, and he was saved.

At nine o'clock, the teachers thanked Miss Travis and said she'd done well. They talked to each other about going someplace for a beer. He felt he should explain himself, rather than sneak out past the crowd, so he stayed in his too small desk. His hip was stiff from sitting so long.

Miss Travis packed up her briefcase and put on her puffy red coat, which made her look blown up, like a balloon. "Are you staying?" she asked.

"No, Ma'am." He levered himself out from behind the desk.

"Are you registered for the class?"

"No, Ma'am. I just saw people coming in."

"Are you interested in school law?"

He thought about how to answer that. "I wasn't before tonight."

She looked at her watch, which was thin and gold-colored. Her wrist was narrow. "Is there somewhere to get food?" she asked. "I have to drive back to Missoula."

The interstate ran straight across Montana, from the edge of North Dakota, where they were, west through Billings and Bozeman and past Logan over the mountains to Missoula, near the Idaho border. "That's an awful long drive," he said.

She shook her head, not in disagreement but in amazement. "I took this job before I finished law school," she said. "I wanted any job, I was so afraid of my loans coming due. I didn't know where Glendive was. It looks like Belgrade, the word does, I mean, which is closer to Missoula—I must have confused them. Then I got a real job, and they're letting me do this because they think it's funny. But it took me nine and a half hours to get here. And now I have to drive nine and a half hours back, and I have to work in the morning. I've never done anything so stupid in my life."

"I can show you where the café is," he said.

She looked at him, as if wondering whether she could trust him, and then she nodded. "O.K.," she said.

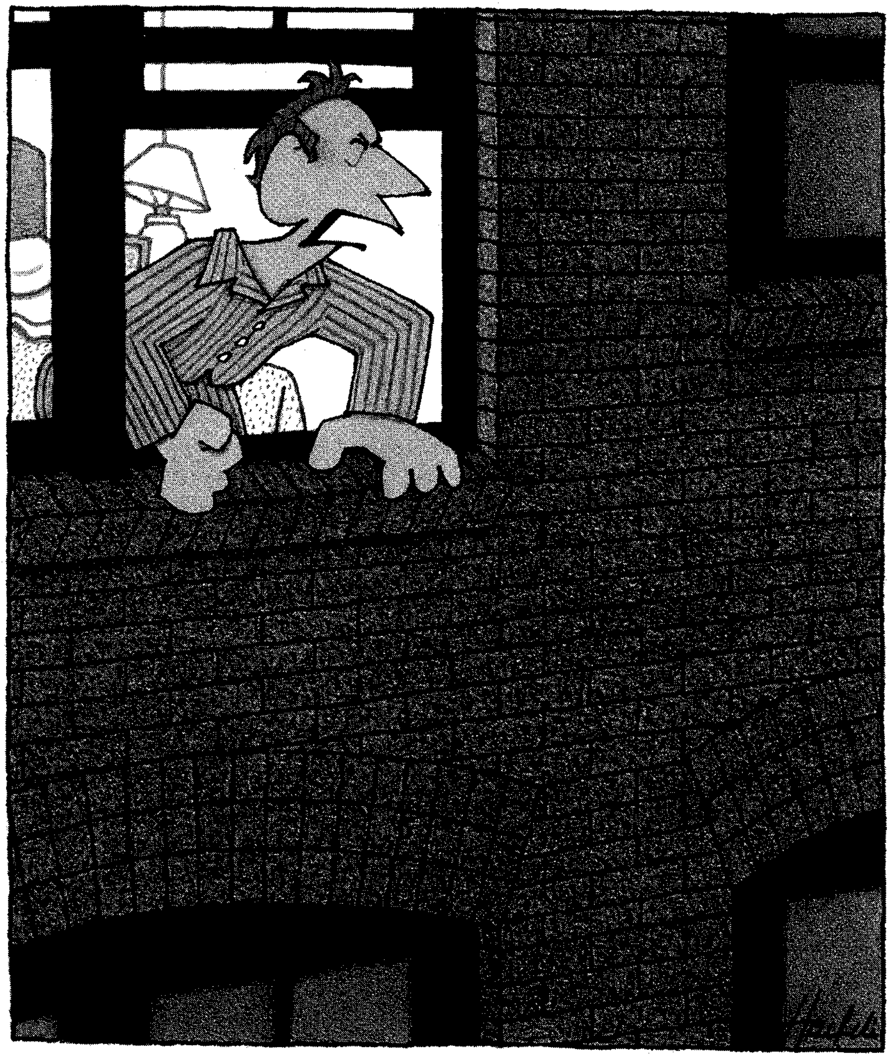
In the parking lot, he was self-conscious about his gait, but she didn't seem to notice. She got into a yellow Datsun and followed his truck to the café on the main drag. He guessed she could have found it herself, but he wanted more time with her. He went in and sat opposite her in a booth. She ordered coffee and a turkey sandwich and a brownie sundae, and asked the waitress to bring it all at once. He didn't want anything. The waitress left, and Beth Travis took off her glasses and set them on the table. She rubbed her eyes until they were red.

"Did you grow up here?" she asked. "Do you know those teachers?"

"No Ma'am."

She put her glasses back on. "I'm only twenty-five," she said. "Don't call me that."

He didn't say anything. He wouldn't have been able to guess her age—she was three years older than he was—but that was because in his mind she had started as a teacher. Her hair in the overhead light was the color of honey. She wasn't wearing any rings.



"Hey! Turn down your damn white-noise machine!"

"Did you tell me how you ended up in that class?" she asked.

"I just saw people going in."

She studied him and seemed to wonder again if she should be afraid. But the room was bright, and he tried to look harmless. He was harmless, he was pretty sure. Being with someone helped—he didn't feel so wound up.

"Did I make a fool of myself?" she asked.

"No."

"Are you going to come back?"

"When's it next?"

"Thursday," she said. "Every Tuesday and Thursday for nine weeks. Oh, God." She put her hands over her eyes again. "What have I done?"

He tried to think how he could help. He had to stay with the cows, and driving to pick her up in Missoula didn't make any sense.

"I'm not signed up," he finally said.

She shrugged. "You could go to the Adult Ed office. But they're not going to check."

"I might, then," he said.

Her food came, and she started on the sandwich.

"I don't even know school law," she said. "I'll have to learn enough to teach each class." She wiped a spot of mustard from her chin. "Where do you work?"

"Out on the Hayden ranch, feeding cattle. It's just a winter job."

"Do you want the other half of this sandwich?"

He shook his head, and she pushed the plate aside and took a bite of the sundae. The ice cream had started to melt over the brownie.

"I'd show you if you could stay longer," he said.

"Show me what?"

"The ranch," he said. "The cows."

"I have to get back," she said. "I have to work in the morning."

"Sure," he said.

She checked her watch. "Jesus, it's quarter to ten." She took a few quick bites of sundae, finished her coffee, and laid a ten-dollar bill on the table. "I have to go."

He watched as the low lights of the Datsun disappeared out of town, then he drove home in the other direction. Thursday was not very far from Tuesday, and it was almost Wednesday now. He was suddenly starving. He wished now that he'd taken the other half of the sandwich, but he had been too shy.

Thursday night, he was at the school before anyone else, and he waited in the truck. One of the teachers showed up with a key, unlocked the side door, and turned on the light. When more people arrived, he went to his seat in the back. Beth Travis came in, took off her coat, and pulled a sheaf of papers from her briefcase. She was wearing a green sweater with a turtleneck collar, jeans, and black snow boots. She walked around with the handouts and nodded to him. She looked good in jeans. "KEY SUPREME COURT DECISIONS AFFECTING SCHOOL LAW" the handout said across the top.

The class started, and Beth Travis asked questions and hands went up. Chet sat in the back and watched. It was strange to see teachers being students, acting like real people. He tried to imagine his old teachers here, but he couldn't. A man not much older than Chet asked about salary increases, and Beth Travis said she wasn't a labor organizer, but he should talk to the union. The older women in the class laughed and teased the man about rabble-rousing. Chet could see cliques forming. At nine o'clock, some of the students went for beers, and he was left alone again with Beth Travis.

"I have to lock up," she said.

For forty-eight hours, he had assumed that he would go to dinner with her, but now he didn't know how to make that happen. He had never asked any girl anywhere. There had been girls in high school who had felt sorry for him, but he had been too shy or too proud to take advantage of it. He stood there for an awkward moment.

"Are you going to the café?" he finally asked.

"For about five minutes," she said.

In the café, she asked for the fastest thing on the menu. The waitress brought her a bowl of soup with bread, coffee to go, and the check.

"I don't even know your name," she said, when the waitress left.

"Chet Moran."

She nodded, as if that were the right answer. "Do you know anyone in town who could teach this class?"

"I don't know anyone at all."

"Can I ask what happened to your leg?"

He was surprised by the question, but he thought she could ask him just about anything. He told her the simplest version: the polio, the horses, the broken bones.

"And you still ride?"

He said that if he didn't ride he'd end up in a wheelchair or a loony bin or both.

She nodded, as if that were the right answer, too, and looked out the window at the dark street. "I was so afraid I'd finish law school and be selling shoes," she said. "I'm sorry to keep talking about it. All I can think about is that drive."

That weekend was the longest one he'd had. He cleaned the tack for the team, and curried the horses until they gleamed and stamped, watching him, suspicious of what he intended. He dosed the calves that needed it with medicine, but mostly they were fine, and went bawling back to their mothers, who waited outside the barn. He wondered if the cows had an idea of their calf, with his habits and smells. Did they worry, or did they just wait for the next thing to happen?

Inside, he sat on the couch, flipped through the channels, and finally turned the TV off. He lay on his back, wondering how he might court a girl who was older, and a lawyer—a girl who lived clear across the state and couldn't think about anything but that distance. He felt a strange sensation in his chest, but it wasn't the restlessness he had felt before.

On Tuesday, he saddled one of the horses and rode it into town, leaving the truck plugged into the orange extension cord. There was a chinook wind, and the night was warm, for January, and the sky clear. The plains spread out dark and flat in every direction, except where the lights glowed from town. At the school, he tethered the horse to the bike rack, out of sight of the side door and the lot where the teachers would park. He took a fat plas-

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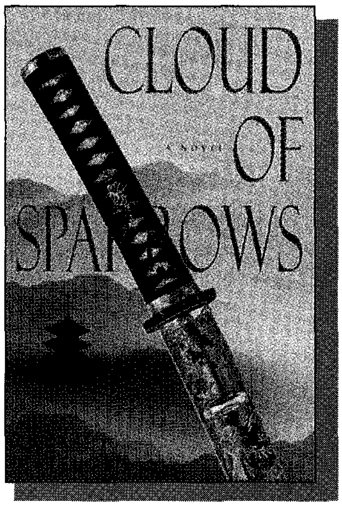

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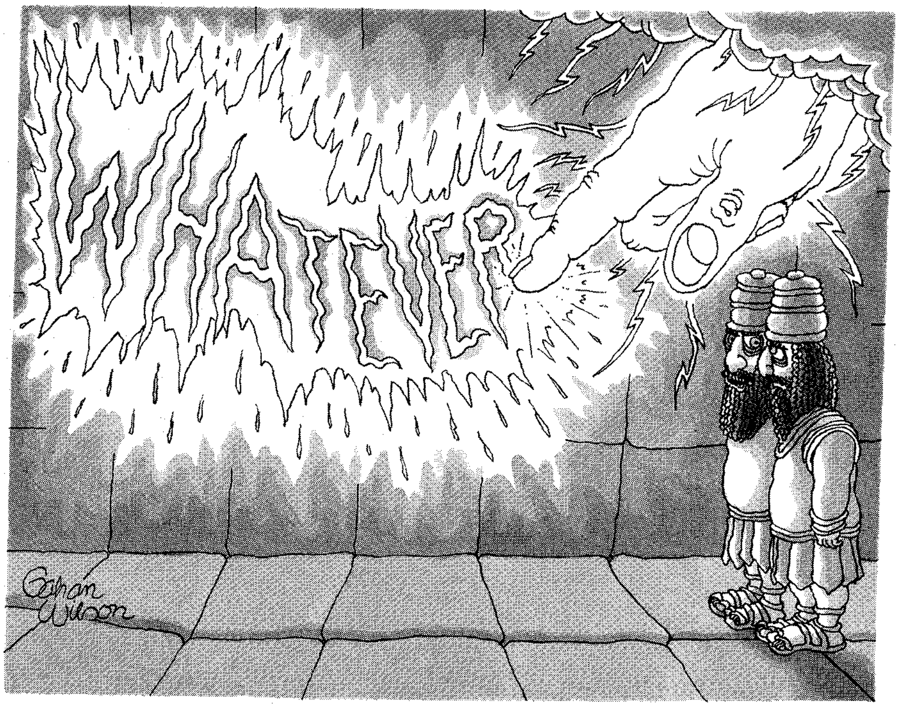

"Not at all the sort of comment one was expecting."

tic bag of oats from his jacket pocket and held it open. The horse sniffed at it, then worked the oats out of the bag with his lips.

"That's all I got," he said, shoving the empty plastic bag back in his pocket.

The horse lifted its head to sniff at the strange town smells.

"Don't get yourself stolen," he told the horse.

When most of the teachers had arrived, he went in and took his seat. Everyone sat in the same seat as they had the week before. They talked about the chinook and whether it would melt the snow. Finally, Beth Travis came in, with her puffy coat and her briefcase. He was even happier to see her than he had expected, and she was wearing jeans again, which was good. He'd been afraid she might wear the narrow wool skirt. She looked harassed and unhappy to be there. The teachers chattered on.

"Can I give you a ride to the café?" he asked, when the class was over and the teachers had cleared out.

"Oh—" she said, and she looked away.

"Not in the truck," he said quickly, and he wondered why a truck might seem more dangerous to a woman. He guessed because it was like a room. "Come outside," he said.

She waited in the parking lot while he untied the horse and mounted up. He rode around from the bike rack, elated with the feeling of easy movement, of sitting a horse as well as anyone did, to where Beth Travis stood hugging her briefcase.

"Oh, my God," she said.

"Don't think about it," he said. "Give me your briefcase. Now give me your hand. Left foot in the stirrup. Now swing the other leg over." She did it, awkwardly, and he pulled her up behind him. He held her briefcase against the pommel, and she held tightly to his jacket, her legs against his. He couldn't think of anything except how warm she was, pressed against the base of his spine. He rode the back way, through the dark streets, before cutting out toward the main drag and stopping short of it, behind the café. He helped her down, swung to the ground after her, gave her the briefcase, and tied the horse. She looked at him and laughed. He'd never seen her laugh before. Her eyebrows went up and her eyes got wide, instead of crinkling up like most people's did. She looked amazed.

In the café, the waitress slid a burger and fries in front of Beth Travis and said, "The cook wants to know if that's your horse out back."

Chet said it was.

"Can he give it some water?"

He said he'd appreciate it.

"Truck break down?" the waitress asked.

He said no, his truck was all right, and the waitress went away.

Beth Travis turned the long end of the oval plate in his direction, and took up the burger. "Have some fries," she said. "How come you never eat anything?"

He wanted to say that he wasn't hungry when he was around her, but he feared she might shy away.

"Why were you afraid of selling shoes?" he asked.

"Have you ever sold shoes? It's hell."

"I mean why were you afraid you couldn't get anything else?"

She looked at the burger as if the answer were in there. Her eyes were almost the same color as her hair and ringed with pale lashes. He had his mother's dark hair, and he wondered if she thought of him as an Indian boy. "I don't know," she said. "Yes, I do know. Because my mother works in a school cafeteria, and my sister works in a hospital laundry, and selling shoes is the nicest job a girl from my family is supposed to get."

"What about your father?"

"I don't know him."

"That's a sad story."

"No, it's not," she said. "It's a happy story. I'm a lawyer, see, with a wonderful job driving to fucking Glendive every fifteen minutes until I lose my mind." She put down the burger and pressed the backs of her hands into her eyes. Her fingers were greasy and one had ketchup on it. She took her hands away from her face and looked at her watch. "It's ten o'clock," she said. "I won't get home before seven-thirty in the morning. There are deer on the road, and there's black ice outside of Three Forks along the river. If I make it past there, I get to take a shower, get dressed, and go to work at eight, and do all the crap no one else wants to do. Then learn more school law tomorrow night, then leave work the next day before lunch and drive back here, with my eyes twitching. It's better than a hospital laundry, maybe, but it's not a whole fucking lot better."

"I'm from near Three Forks."

"So you know the ice."

He nodded.

She dipped her napkin in her water glass and washed off her fingers, then finished her coffee. "It was nice of you to bring the horse," she said. "Will you take me back to my car?"

Outside, he swung her up onto the horse again, and she put her arms around his waist. She seemed to fit to his body like a puzzle piece. He rode slowly back to the school parking lot, not wanting to let her go. Next to the yellow Datsun, he held her hand tight while she climbed down, and then he dismounted, too. She tugged her puffy coat where it had ridden up, and they stood looking at each other.

"Thank you," she said.

He nodded. He wanted to kiss her but couldn't see any clear path to that happening. He wished he had practiced, with the high-school girls or the friendly secretaries, just to be ready for this moment.

She started to say something, but in his nervousness he cut her off. "See you Thursday," he said.

She paused before nodding, and he took this for encouragement. He caught up her hand again and kissed it, and it was soft and cold. Then he leaned over and kissed her cheek, because he had wanted to do that, too. She didn't move, not an inch, and he was about to kiss her for real when she seemed to snap out of a trance, and stepped away from him. She took her hand back. "I have to go," she said, and she went around to the driver's side of the Datsun.

He held the horse while she drove out of the parking lot, and kicked at the snow. The horse sidestepped away. He felt like jumping up and down, in excitement and anxiety and anguish. He had run her off. He shouldn't have kissed her. He should have kissed her more. He should have let her say what she wanted to say. He mounted up and rode home.

Thursday night he drove the truck in, no cowboy antics; he was on a serious mission. He was going to answer her questions honestly. He was going to let her say the things she intended to say. He didn't wait for the crowd to arrive before going into the classroom; he went in early and took his seat in the back. The classroom filled up, and then a tall man in a gray suit with a bowling-ball gut came in, and stood behind the teacher's desk.

"Miss Travis," he said, "found the drive from Missoula too arduous, so I will take over the class for the rest of the term. I practice law here in town. As some of you know, and the rest of you would find out soon enough, I'm recently divorced and have some time on my hands. That's why I'm here."

While the man talked on, Chet got up from his seat and made his way up the aisle to the door. Outside, he stood breathing the cold air into his lungs. The lights of town swam in his eyes until he blinked them clear again and climbed into the rancher's truck. He started it and looked at the odometer: 156,358 miles. He gave it enough gas so the engine wouldn't quit, and it coughed and steadied itself and ran.

He knew that Beth Travis lived in Missoula, six hundred miles west, over the mountains, but he didn't know where. He didn't know if the truck would make it all that way, or what the rancher would do when he found out he'd gone. He didn't know if it was he who had scared her off or the drive.

But he put the truck in gear and pulled out of town in the direction he had three times watched the yellow Datsun go. The road was flat and straight and seemed to roll underneath the truck, dark and silent, through a dark and silent expanse of snow-covered land. He stopped outside of Miles City, and again outside of Billings, and hobbled around on his stiffened-up leg until he could drive again. Near Big Timber, the plains ended and the mountains began, black shapes rising up against the stars. He stopped in Bozeman for coffee and gas, and drove the white line on the empty road past Logan and Three Forks, to

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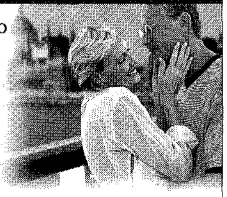

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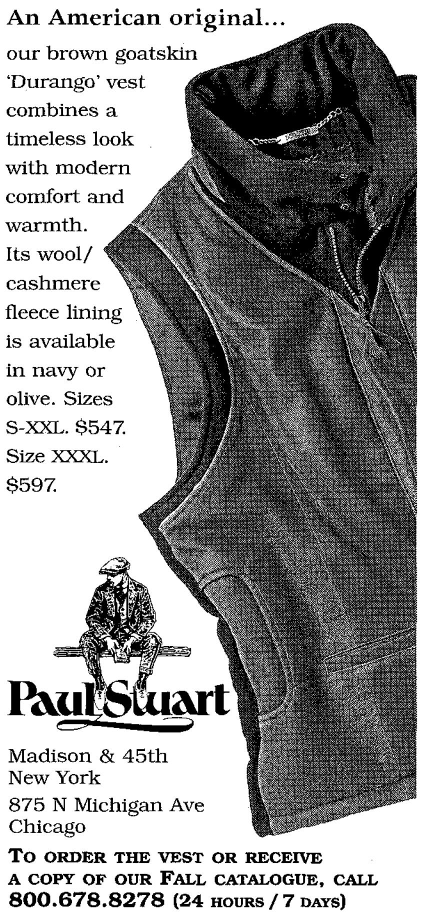

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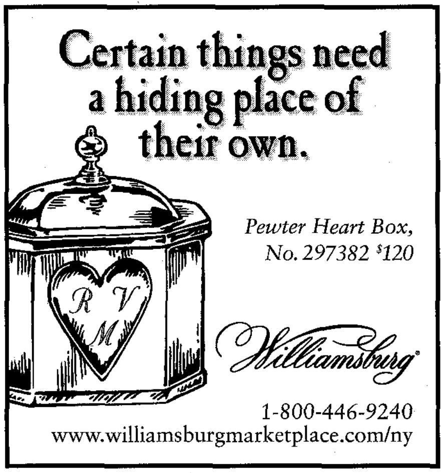

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stay out of the ice that spread from the shoulder in black sheets. Somewhere off to his right, his parents were sleeping.

It was still dark when he reached Missoula, and he took the side streets, hoping he might happen on a yellow Datsun parked outside a house. He stopped at a minimart and looked up "Travis" in the phone book, and there was a Travis B with a phone number, but no address. He wrote down the number with a borrowed pen, but didn't call it. He asked the kid at the cash register where the law offices were in town, and the kid shrugged and said, "Maybe downtown."

"Where's that?"

The kid stared at him. "It's downtown," he said, and he pointed off to his left.

Downtown, Chet found himself in dawn light among shops and old brick buildings and one-way streets. He parked in a one-hour parking spot and got out to stretch his hip. The mountains were so close they made him feel claustrophobic. When he found a carved wooden sign saying "Attorneys at Law," he asked the secretary who came to open the office if she knew a lawyer named Beth Travis.

The secretary looked at his twisted leg, his boots, and his coat, and shook her head.

In the next law office, the secretary was friendlier. She called the law school and asked where Beth Travis had gone to work, then cupped her hand over the receiver. "She took a teaching job in Glendive."

"She has another job, too. Here."

The secretary relayed this information over the phone, then wrote something down on a piece of paper and handed it to him.

"Down by the old railroad depot," she said, pointing toward the window with her pencil.

"Can I walk there?"

She glanced at his legs and smiled, embarrassed, when she saw him notice.

"I'll drive," he said.

"Good luck."

He pulled up at the address on the piece of paper at eight-thirty, just as Beth Travis's yellow Datsun pulled into the same parking lot. He got out of the truck feeling jittery. She was rummaging in her briefcase, and didn't see him. Then she looked up. She looked at the truck behind him, then back at him again.

"I drove over," he said.

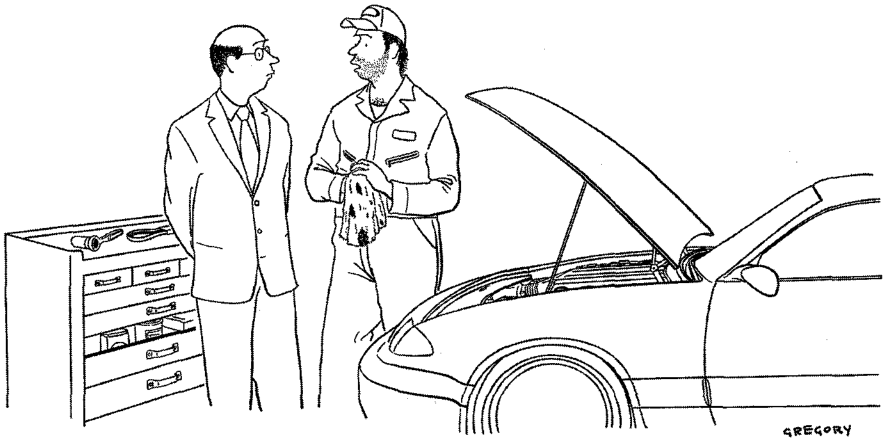
"I thought I was in the wrong place," she said. She let the briefcase hang at her side. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to see you."

She nodded, slowly. He stood as straight as he could. She lived in another world from him. You could fly to Hawaii or France in less time than it took to do that drive. Her world had lawyers, downtowns, and mountains in it. His world had horses that had woken up hungry, and cows waiting in the snow, and it was going to be ten hours before he could get back to get them fed.

"I was sorry you stopped teaching the class," he said. "I looked forward to it, those nights."

"It wasn't because—" she said. "I meant to tell you on Tuesday. I'd already



"There are three courses of action we can take now—I can call you Ace, Chief, or Big Guy."

asked for a replacement, because of the drive. They found one yesterday.”

“O.K.,” he said. “That drive is pretty bad.”

“You see?”

A man in a dark suit got out of a silver car and looked over at them, sizing Chet up. Beth Travis waved and smiled. The man nodded, looked at Chet again, and went into the building; the door closed. Chet suddenly wished that she *had* quit teaching the class because of him. He shifted his weight. She pushed her hair out of her face and he thought he could step forward and touch her hand, touch the back of her neck where the hair grew darker. Instead he shoved his hands into his jeans pockets. She seemed to scan the parking lot before looking at him again.

“I don’t mean any harm,” he said.

“O.K.”

“I have to go feed now,” he said. “I just knew that if I didn’t start driving I wasn’t going to see you again, and I didn’t want that. That’s all.”

She nodded. He waited, thinking she might say something. He wanted to hear her voice again. He wanted to touch her, any part of her, her arms, maybe, her waist. She stood just out of reach, waiting for him to go.

Finally, he climbed up into the truck and started the engine. She was still watching him from the parking lot as he drove away, and he thought about driving back, but he didn’t. He got on the highway and left town. For the first half hour he gripped the steering wheel so hard his knuckles turned white, and glared at the road as the truck swallowed it up. Then suddenly he was too tired to be angry, and his eyes started to close and jerk open. He nearly drove off the road. In Butte, he bought a cup of black coffee, and drank it standing next to the truck. He wished he hadn’t seen her right away in the parking lot. He wished he’d had a minute to prepare. He crushed the paper coffee cup and threw it away.

As he drove past Logan, he thought about stopping, but he didn’t. He knew what his parents would say. His mother would worry about his health, driving all night, her sickly son, risking his life. “You don’t even know this white girl,” she’d say. His father would say, “Jesus, Chet, you left the horses without water all day?”

Back at the Hayden place, he fed and watered the horses, and they seemed all right. None of them had kicked through their stalls. He rigged them up in the harness, and loaded the sled with hay, and they dragged it out of the barn. He cut the orange twine on each bale with a knife and pitched the hay off the sled for the cows. The horses trudged uncomplainingly, and he thought about the skittery two-year-olds who’d kicked him everywhere there was to kick, when he was fourteen. The ache in his stomach felt like that. But he hadn’t been treated unfairly by Beth Travis; he didn’t know what he had expected. If she had asked him to stay, he would have had to leave anyway. It was the finality of the conversation, and the protective look that the man in the dark suit had given her, that left him feeling sore and bruised.

In the barn, he talked to the horses, and kept close to their hind legs when he moved behind them. They were sensible horses, immune to surprise, but he had left them without water all day. He gave them each another coffee canful of grain, which slid yellow over itself into their buckets.

He walked back outside, into the dark, and looked out over the flat stretch of land beyond the fences. The moon was up, and the fields were shadowy blue, dotted with cows. His hip was stiff and sore. He had to pee, and he walked away from the barn and watched the small steaming crater form in the snow. He wondered if maybe he had planted a seed, with Beth Travis, by demonstrating his seriousness to her. She wouldn’t come back—it was impossible to imagine her doing that drive again, for any reason. But she knew where he was, and his parents and his uncle were the only Morans in Logan. She was a lawyer. She could find him if she wanted.

But she wouldn’t. That was the thing that made him ache. He buttoned his jeans and shifted his hip. He had wanted practice, with girls, and now he had gotten it, but he wished it had felt more like practice. It was getting colder, and he would have to go inside soon. He fished her phone number out of his pocket and studied it awhile in the moonlight, until he knew it by heart and wouldn’t forget it. Then he did what he knew he should do, and rolled it into a ball, and threw it away. ♦

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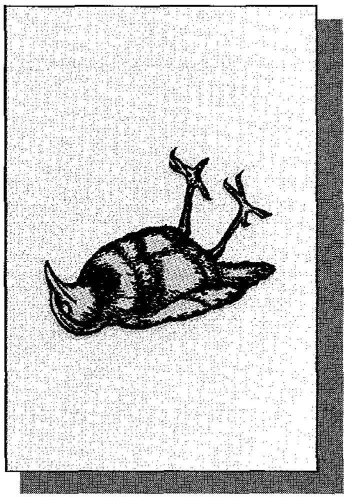

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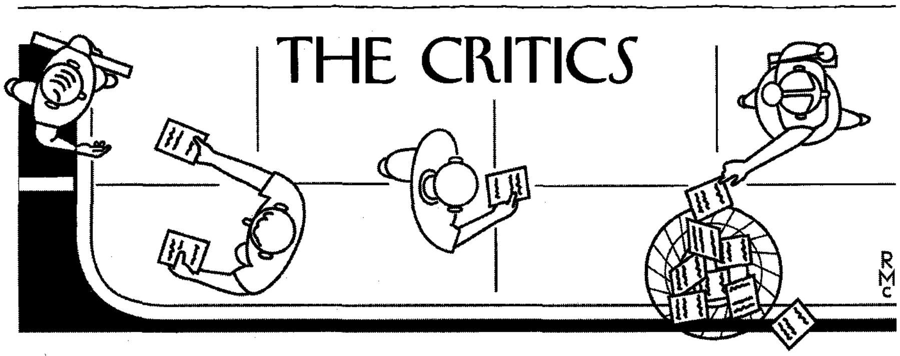


BOOKS

PHOTO FINISH

Rosalind Franklin and the great DNA race.

BY JIM HOLT

The structure of DNA, the molecule of life, was discovered in the early months of 1953. Nine years later, three men were jointly awarded a Nobel Prize for this achievement, which has proved to be one of the most consequential in the history of science. James Watson and Francis Crick, who worked at the Cavendish Laboratory, in Cambridge, England, came up with the famous double-helix structure. The third man honored, Maurice Wilkins, was a scientist in London; although he worked at a rival lab, he did make available to Watson and Crick some of the experimental evidence that helped them clinch their discovery. The person actually responsible for this evidence, however, was not Wilkins but an estranged colleague of his named Rosalind Franklin, who had died four years before the prize was awarded.

For a decade after her death, Rosalind Franklin remained little known beyond the world of molecular biology. Then, in 1968, Watson published "The Double Helix," his rambunctious, best-selling account of the race to solve the structure of DNA. In its pages, Rosalind Franklin becomes Rosy, a bluestocking virago who hoards her data, stubbornly misses their import, and occasionally threatens Watson and others with physical violence—but who might not be "totally uninteresting" if she "took off her glasses and did something novel with her hair."

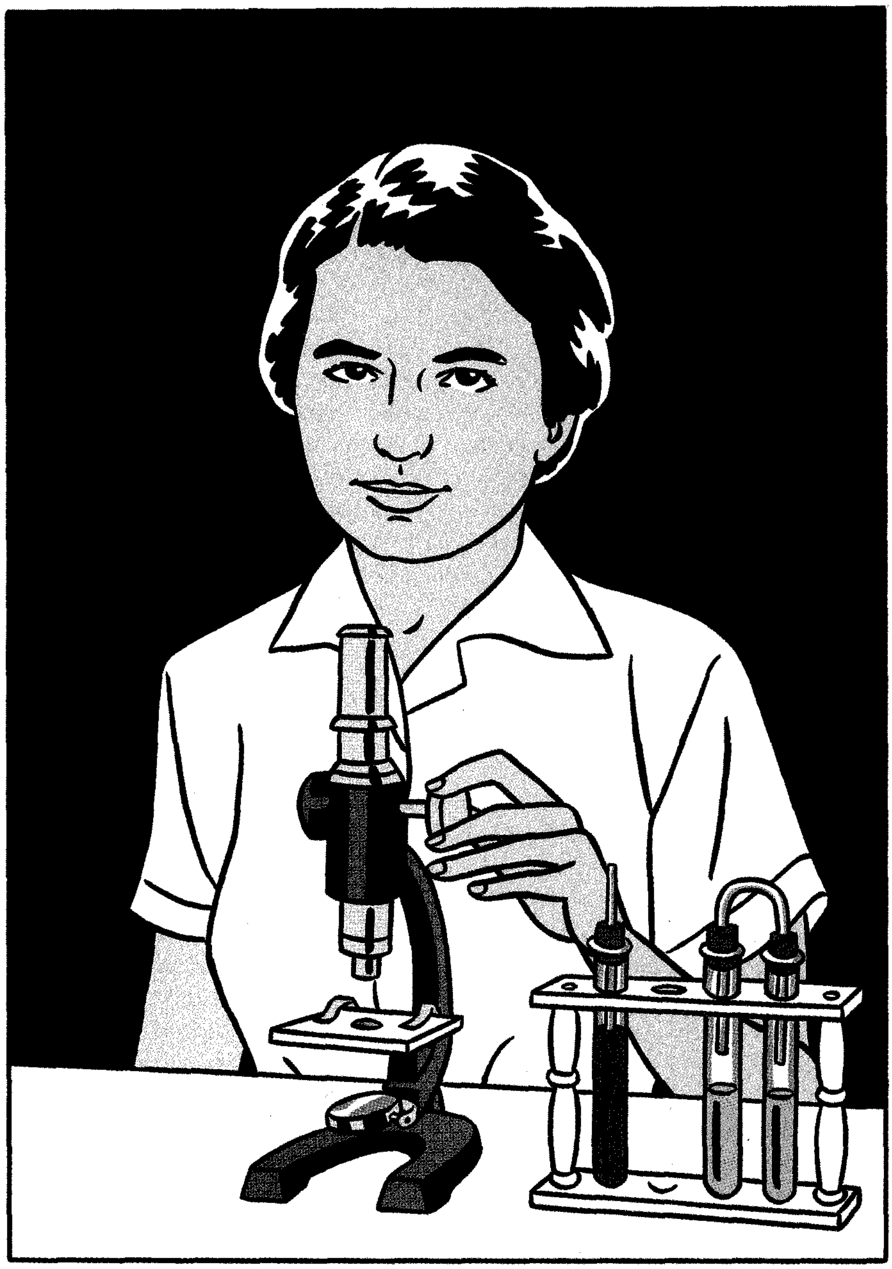
Friends and colleagues of hers mounted a counter-offensive, which was soon joined by feminist historians of science. Why did Watson create Rosy the Witch? Out of guilt for having used her evidence, which Wilkins showed him without her knowledge. Neither Watson nor Crick ever admitted to Franklin that they had relied crucially on her research; neither so much as mentioned her in his Nobel acceptance speech. Moreover, Franklin herself had made great progress toward identifying the structure of DNA. Had she not been the rare woman laboring in a patriarchal scientific establishment that limited her opportunities and stifled her talents, the triumph might well have been hers. So her partisans have contended.

"Since Watson's book, Rosalind Franklin has become a feminist icon, the Sylvia Plath of molecular biology, the woman whose gifts were sacrificed to the greater glory of the male," Brenda Maddox writes in "Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA" (HarperCollins; $29.95). This mythologizing, Maddox thinks, has done Rosalind's memory a disservice. One wouldn't guess from the "doomed heroine" caricature, for instance, that Rosalind enjoyed an international reputation in three different fields of research. Nor would one guess from Watson's depiction that, far from being frumpier than the average Englishwoman, she had actually brought with her to London elements of Christian Dior's New Look that she had picked up during her years in Paris. Maddox, who has previously written lives of D. H. Lawrence and Nora Joyce, tells Rosalind's story engagingly. We get a vivid picture of her scientific prowess, the complexity of her character, and the stoicism with which she pursued her research during her final months even as she was dying of ovarian cancer. Inevitably, though, it is her part in the DNA drama which commands the most interest. Did she really play an indispensable role in the great 1953 discovery, as Maddox finally joins so many others in suggesting? Was she cheated of the credit due her because she was a woman?

Rosalind Franklin was born in London in 1920 to a prominent Anglo-Jewish family. (Her great-uncle had been installed by the British as the first High Commissioner of Palestine.) The one indulgence of her "frugal rich" parents was foreign travel; they favored vigorous mountain hiking trips—an activity that became a Wordsworthian passion for Rosalind. At sixteen, she chose science as her subject, selecting the "hard" areas of physics, mathematics, and chemistry rather than the botany and biology courses usually taken by girls. She avoided the social whirl. At the age of twenty-one, after three years of study at wartime Cambridge, she confessed to a cousin that she had never been kissed and did not know how the human ovum was fertilized. In 1945, she submitted a Ph.D. thesis on how the porosity of carbon was affected by heat, a subject she mockingly described as "the holes in coal."

In fact, Rosalind's research predilections centered on something very beautiful, the idea of a crystal. To a mathematician, a crystal is a regular system of points that, if repeated indefinitely, will fill all of space. For a crystal in nature, such as table salt, these points are invisibly tiny atoms that are held in place by chemical bonds. In the early twentieth century, it was found that the wavelength of X rays is about the same as the space between atoms in crystalline matter. As X rays penetrate a crystal, they are deflected by the rows of atoms. This causes interference among them: some of the waves reinforce one another, while others cancel one another out. If a photographic plate is placed on the other side of a crystal being bombarded with X rays, a pattern of bright and dark spots eventually appears—a pattern that, in principle, would allow one to infer the molecular architecture of the crystal.

Rosalind eagerly absorbed the theory of crystallography, and so joined, as Maddox puts it, "the small band of the human



Franklin scorned the intuitive leaps that led Watson and Crick to their breakthrough.

race for whom infinitesimal specks of matter are as real and solid as billiard balls." Upon finishing her doctoral work, she got the offer of her dreams: a job at a crystallography lab on a quai up the river from Notre Dame. The four years that she spent in Paris, from 1947 to 1950, were evidently the happiest time of her life. Living in a garret in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, speaking almost accentless French, and working with a congenial and cultured group of scientists, she felt at home in a way she never had in England. The head of her *labo* was a dashing and brilliant Russian-born Jew named Jacques Mering, whose specialty was the study of "disordered matter"—crystals whose molecular arrangement was in some disarray. Rosalind picked up crystallographic expertise from Mering, and she also seems to have developed romantic feelings for him, even though he was already equipped with a wife and a mistress. Maddox speculates that Mering "made advances of some sort" to Rosalind, and that "she allowed herself to be tempted farther than was usual for her but eventually, incapable of a casual liaison, drew back." If so, it was probably the closest brush she ever had with carnal knowledge. As one of her fellow-*chercheurs* later put it, she was "like Queen Victoria about men."

FLOCH

Despite the pleasures of her life and work in Paris, Rosalind had always planned to return to London. In England, as in America, chemists and physicists were discovering a new research vista: life. The cells that make up an organism, after all, consist of atoms and molecules, which must obey the laws of physics and chemistry. It made sense, therefore, to try to bring the concepts and methods of the physical sciences to bear on biological mysteries. (After the creation of the atomic bomb, physicists found the prospect of escaping from the science of death to the science of life especially appealing.) Rosalind, though avowedly "ignorant about all things biological," applied for a position at the biophysics laboratory of King's College, London, and was accepted. Her arrival there, in 1951, marked the beginning of what Maddox calls "one of the great personal quarrels in the history of science."

The man who gave Rosalind the job in London, J. T. Randall, was something of a war hero in Britain because of his role in the development of radar. He was also happily out of step with the misogyny that prevailed in the scientific establishment at the time. Randall put women into more than a quarter of the positions in his lab and had a reputation for creating a helpful environment for them. The task he offered Rosalind was to investigate the structure of "certain biological fibres in which we are interested"—namely, DNA. This could scarcely have been a more important assignment. But the setting in which she was to carry it out filled her with gloom. King's College was dominated by clerics ("hooded crows," she called them) who trained students for the Anglican priesthood. The scientists were relegated to a cellar laboratory on the Strand, built around a bomb crater from the war. The atmosphere struck Rosalind as coarse and schoolboyish. Worse, her new colleagues were intellectually mediocre. As she wrote to a friend in Paris, "There isn't a first-class or even a good brain among them—in fact nobody with whom I particularly want to discuss anything, scientific or otherwise." The greatest indignity came when she found that she was expected to share the DNA project with the lab's deputy director, Maurice Wilkins, whom she soon decided she could not abide.

Wilkins was a New Zealand-born physicist who had worked on the Manhattan Project during the Second World War. He was unmarried and in his midthirties when Rosalind encountered him—tall, gauntly handsome, and attractive to women. His mild temperament, a little old-maidish perhaps, contrasted with Rosalind's brusque combativeness. She found him "middle class" and unworthy of being her collaborator. Wilkins made little gestures to win her favor, like buying her chocolates, but to no avail. When he gave a progress report on his own crystallographic research on DNA, Rosalind peremptorily ordered him to abandon X-ray work and stick to his optical studies. "Go back to your microscopes" is how he recalls her putting it.

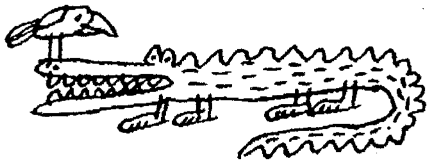
What Wilkins described on that occasion was evidence he had obtained which suggested that DNA had the form of a helix, rather like a spiral staircase. Helices were very much in the air at that moment. Only a few months earlier, Linus Pauling had published his discovery that certain proteins had a helical form. Pauling, who was working at Caltech, in Pasadena, was the foremost chemist of his time. Since he had discovered the structure of one important kind of biological molecule, it was natural for him to start thinking about DNA. Meanwhile, in Cambridge, at the Cavendish Laboratory, a thirty-five-year-old physicist named Francis Crick was becoming friends with a twenty-three-year-old American biologist named James Watson. Watson knew genetics; Crick knew X-ray crystallography. Impressed by Pauling's achievement, and having heard from Wilkins what the King's College lab was up to, they also turned their attention to the structure of DNA.

The stage was set for a three-way competition among London, Cambridge, and Pasadena. London, however, had an enormous advantage: a jam jar containing the best sample of DNA in the world. The gooey gel could be stretched out into long, fragile strings. "It's just like snot!" Wilkins exclaimed. Rudolf Signer, a Swiss scientist who had isolated the sample from the thymus glands of calves, had generously given it to Wilkins at a scientific meeting. How Signer managed to get DNA in such a pristine form is a mystery; he never fully explained his recipe. But it soon became clear that his gel could yield beautifully crisp diffraction patterns.

Upon Rosalind's arrival at King's College, the Signer DNA was turned over to her. Using state-of-the-art equipment, she began to get superb X-ray photographs. She also found that the Signer DNA fibres could be made to assume two distinct forms: a longer "wet" form, and a more compact "dry" one. All earlier X-ray photographs of DNA had been a confusing blur of the two. But when Wilkins pointed out that her patterns, too, were consistent with a helical structure, Rosalind snapped, "How dare you interpret my data for me?" His proposal of collaboration was angrily rejected. The atmosphere in the lab became so poisonous that Randall had to intervene, setting out a formal division of labor. Rosalind got all the Signer DNA and the new X-ray cameras. Wilkins was left with the old equipment and an inferior sample of DNA. And that was more or less the end of any communication between them.

Maddox does not hesitate to assign blame for all this. "The rift was Randall's doing," she writes. In inviting Rosalind to the King's College lab, he had sent her an ambiguous letter leading her to believe that she would be in exclusive command of the DNA project; it was understandable, the author implies, that she should resent Wilkins's continued involvement. Wilkins was not the only object of her animosity in the lab, however. "She nearly terrified the living daylights out of me," one graduate student recalled. Maddox attributes Rosalind's rebarbativeness to the patriarchal atmosphere of London: "In Paris she was confident, admired, independent. Now she was a daughter again." That may be; but it is also true that, less than a year after her return to England, Rosalind found herself in sole custody of all the experimental means needed to discover the structure of DNA.

In Cambridge, Watson and Crick had none of that. They did, however, enjoy a remarkable personal affinity. "Neither had an ounce of depression in him, while Rosalind and Maurice, in their very different ways, were prey to melancholy," Maddox writes. Watson and Crick's approach to the structure of DNA was inspired by the method that Linus Pauling had used so successfully with proteins: model-building.



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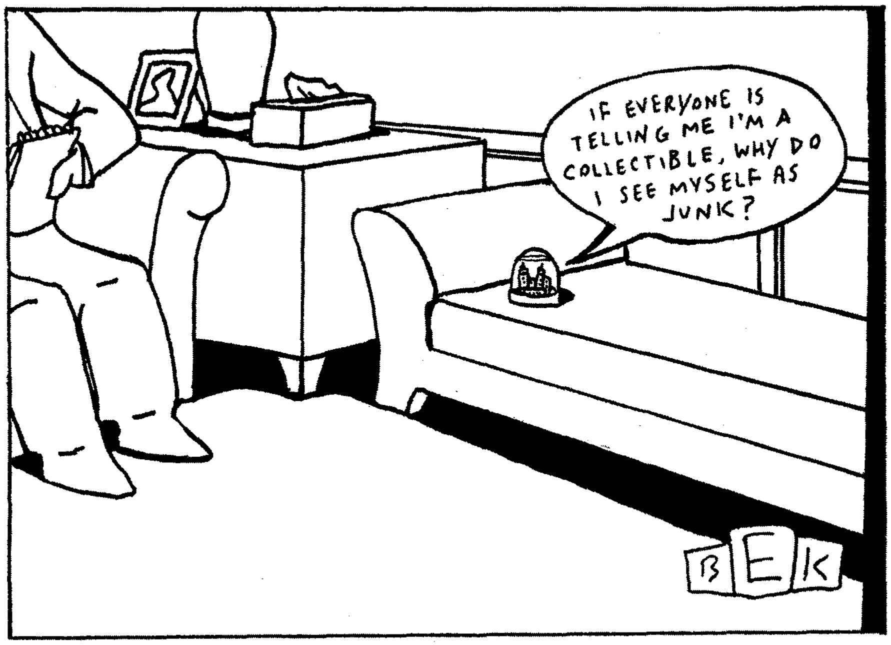
IF EVERYONE IS TELLING ME I'M A COLLECTIBLE, WHY DO I SEE MYSELF AS JUNK?
BEK

Guided by the rules of chemistry, they would make an educated guess about how DNA was put together, and construct a model out of metal rods and wires and colored plastic balls. No need to mess around with any snotlike gel. Rosalind had nothing but scorn for this speculative approach. Even if one managed to slap together a model that satisfied the X-ray data, how could one be sure that it was the only model that would do so? How would one know, she wondered, whether it was "the solution or a solution"?

What everyone at the time did know about DNA was that it consisted of a sequence of four different bases attached to a sugar-phosphate chain. These bases were adenine, guanine, thymine, and cytosine (usually abbreviated A, G, T, and C). The precise sequence presumably encoded the genetic information. As for the over-all architecture, it seemed reasonable to start by assuming that DNA was a helix. Pauling had already shown that a helical structure could lend stability to large biological molecules, and the preliminary X-ray evidence for DNA jibed with this hypothesis. But what kind of helix? And would its structure shed light on the molecule's singular function—self-reproduction?

In late 1951, Watson went down to listen to the London team talk about what they had learned so far, and he returned to Cambridge with a slightly garbled memory of their data. A week later, he and Crick had come up with a model for DNA. It was a triple helix, with the bases facing outward, so that they could interact with proteins. They invited the King's College group up to see their handiwork. It got a withering reception. Rosalind—who, unlike Watson and Crick, was actually a chemist—pointed out that the molecule as they had constructed it would not even hold together. Maddox reports that Rosalind was "jubilant" on the train back to London: "She had not expected the model to be right. The whole approach was unprofessional." Watson and Crick tried to salvage matters by suggesting that the two groups join forces, but Rosalind wanted nothing to do with them. After this debacle, the director of the Cavendish lab, Sir Lawrence Bragg, ordered Watson and Crick to leave the investigation of DNA to King's. As a token of compliance, the pair even sent their model-making jigs down to London, where they remained idle.

Rosalind, who now had the field pretty much to herself, was intent on deducing the molecular structure of DNA directly from the spots on the X-ray pictures, without any imaginative guesswork. Such a deduction would entail endless rounds of laborious calculation. Undeterred, Rosalind plunged in. She and her assistant also continued with their X-ray photography, taking long exposures—some lasting a hundred hours—of a sin-

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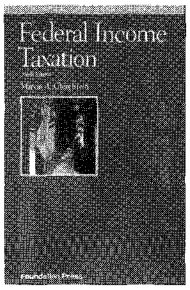

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gle fibre of DNA. Sometime in the spring of 1952, she obtained the most stunning pattern yet for the wet form: a stark, X-shaped array of black stripes radiating out from the center. It fairly shouted helix. Rosalind numbered it Photograph 51 and put it aside. She was more interested in the dry-form photos, which contained the complex detail that, with fastidious measurement, might enable her to compute the form of DNA. And this detail did not point to a helical structure. That July, in an uncharacteristic prank, she even conducted a mock funeral for the helix. She spent the next few months with her slide rule, buried in books of numerical tables.

Maddox finds her earthbound approach understandable, given what she sees as the "hostile environment" in which Rosalind found herself: "If she had felt very confident and supported, she might have been able to make outrageous leaps of imagination." Maybe, though, she sensed little urgency to do so. Watson and Crick had been banned from investigating DNA. Pauling was still finishing up his work on proteins; and, in any case, as Rosalind knew, the only DNA photographs he had were old ones in which the two forms were deceptively superimposed. As for Wilkins, next door, he was too cowed to ask Rosalind for her data, much less for some of the precious DNA sample that had originally been his.

Watson and Crick, as it happened, could also afford to be patient. They were confident that Rosalind, in rejecting the helix, had headed up a blind alley. Crick saw how she had been misled by her painstaking measurements: the supposed anti-helical features in her photographs, he realized, were actually distortions that arose in the DNA helix when it coiled up into the dry form. Watson and Crick's method was the opposite of Rosalind's: trust no datum until it has been confirmed by theory. They were determined to solve the structure of DNA with as few empirical assumptions as possible.

Besides, what real data did they have access to? Rosalind was not publishing her X-ray photographs of DNA. Watson and Crick had heard about them from Wilkins, but not even he had seen the extraordinary Photograph 51. In May of 1952, Pauling was to be the guest of honor at a Royal Society meeting on proteins in London. Had he attended, he might well have been shown Rosalind's photographs and picked up from them what he needed to solve the structure of DNA. But the trip was aborted; because of McCarthyist suspicions about Pauling's political sympathies, the United States State Department had refused to issue him a passport.

MY RAVINE

How will you know what my poem is like
until you've gone down my ravine and seen

the box springs, mattresses, bookcases, and desks
the neighboring women's college dumps each year,

somebody's hair dryer, someone's Herodotus
a poem's dream landscape, one half Latin and

one half shit, the neighboring women's college's shit?
Wheelbarrow upon wheelbarrow, a humpbacked

custodian hauls old dormitory furniture down
and launches it, watching it roll into the pile.

You won't know how my poem decides what's in,
what's out, what decorum means and doesn't mean,

until you follow him home after work and see him
going wild all night imagining those girls' old beds.

You won't know what I'm trying for until you hear
how every fall in my back yard a swarm of deer

materializes, scavenging where the raspberries touched
the radishes, now plowed under, itching the lawn

for dandelions, stare at each other and wander
bewildered down my ravine and turn into skeletons.

—*Dan Chiasson*

Pauling pressed ahead with his model-building all the same, relying on his unrivalled grasp of the geometry of chemical bonds. At the end of 1952, Watson and Crick were devastated by the news that Pauling had worked out a structure for DNA. They awaited his paper with trepidation, but when it arrived, on January 28, 1953, they were delighted to find that Pauling had made the same blooper they had more than a year earlier. Like their old model, his was a chemically defective three-stranded helix with the bases on the outside. Watson and Crick knew that Pauling's errors would be pointed out to him, and that, given a second crack at the DNA problem, he would probably solve it. They figured they had, at most, six weeks.

That same day, Rosalind was giving her final seminar at King's College. She had had enough of that basement full of "positively repulsive" mediocrities, and had accepted an invitation from the great crystallographer J. D. Bernal to join his lab in London, at Birkbeck College. She would leave off DNA research and apply her X-ray skills to the study of viruses. Summarizing her work at King's, she neither referred to the wet form of DNA nor showed the splendid photographs she had taken of it. Instead, she concentrated on her supposed evidence that the dry form of the molecule was not helical.

A couple of days later, Watson turned up in her lab unbidden, offering to show her Pauling's model. When she countered with her anti-helical evidence, Watson, by his own account in "The Double Helix," decided to "risk a full explosion" by implying that she was incompetent in interpreting her own X-ray pictures: "Suddenly Rosy came from behind the lab bench that separated us and began moving toward me. Fearing that in her hot anger she might strike me, I grabbed up the Pauling manuscript and hastily retreated to the open door." Watson then encountered Wilkins, who, he claimed, told him that some months earlier "she had made a similar lunge toward him." Wilkins proceeded to do something that has widely been deemed unethical: he showed Watson one of Rosalind's photographs—probably Photograph 51. "The instant I saw the picture my mouth fell open and my pulse began to race," Watson recalled. On the train back to Cambridge, he sketched from memory, in the margin of a newspaper, the pattern he had seen.

From this point on, Watson and Crick needed only one month to wrap up the matter. Bragg authorized the two to resume their model-building, with jigs to be turned out by the machine shop. Watson plumped for a helical structure with two chains. "Francis would have to agree," he later wrote. "Even though he was a physicist, he knew that important biological objects come in pairs." Then they had a couple of lucky breaks. Crick noticed a symmetry in DNA that had eluded Rosalind and her colleagues: the crystal had the same form when it was turned upside down. As he immediately realized, this meant that the two chains that made up the helix must run in opposite directions, like up and down escalators. Their second break came when an off-the-cuff remark made by a new lab mate (a former student of Pauling's, as it happened) supplied the necessary clue to how the two chains of the helix held together. As they'd begun to suspect, it was the bases that bonded. Whenever A occurred on one chain, T was invariably paired with it on the other; the two fit snugly together because of their shapes. Ditto for C and G. Therefore, one chain of the double helix was an upside-down negative of the other. When separated, each might serve as a template on which a new, complementary chain could be assembled with exactly the same information as the old. That, Watson and Crick realized, was how the molecule reproduced itself, and how nature, for the last four billion years, had counteracted the tendency of matter to become disordered. At lunchtime on February 28, 1953, Watson recounted, his partner "winged into The Eagle"—a Cambridge pub—"to tell everyone within hearing distance that we had found the secret of life." That April, the two presented their model, in a nine-hundred-word prose poem, in the scientific journal *Nature*. The elegance with which the DNA structure merged form and function seemed to guarantee its truth. "It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material," the authors demurely noted.

Rosalind was not bowled over by Watson and Crick's model. "It's very pretty, but how are they going to prove it?" was her reaction. Rosalind, Maddox writes, "had been trained, as a child . . . as an undergraduate, as a scientist, never to overstate the case, never to go beyond hard evidence." Had Rosalind been a man, the author suggests, she might have been encouraged to be more audacious. Yet a knack for guessing at an answer ahead of the evidence is one of the things that distinguish a great scientist from a good one, regardless of gender. Perhaps Rosalind was merely a very good scientist, not a great one. Or, perhaps, given a little more time, she would have discovered the structure of DNA herself. Crick has generously ventured that she was three months away, but it is doubtful that Rosalind realized it, given her decision to leave the investigation of DNA to take up the crystallographic study of viruses.

Still, as Maddox notes, "Rosalind's Photograph 51 was the pivotal moment in the discovery of the double helix." Doesn't that make her partly responsible for that discovery? Well, there are two

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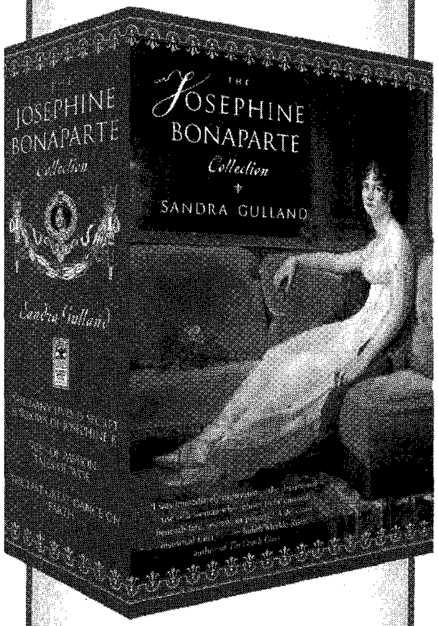

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senses of "responsible": a moral sense and a causal sense. Rosalind was not morally responsible for the discovery, because she didn't willingly share or publish her most important data and she spurned would-be collaborators, including Watson and Crick. It was Wilkins who showed Photograph 51 to Watson. Maddox absolves Wilkins of the charge that it was unethical of him to have done so, but still maintains that Wilkins's action was "unwise." It is hard to see why. The ban on Watson and Crick's working on DNA had nothing to do with gentlemanly fair play; it was an attempt to allocate scientific resources efficiently—resources that were quite scarce in postwar Britain. Besides, Rosalind had already had the photograph for nine months without interpreting it correctly—whereas Watson saw its significance at a glance. What was unwise—and a little cowardly—was Watson and Crick's unwillingness to admit to Rosalind that they had been given access to her photograph, and their failure to acknowledge her experimental work more graciously, at least during her lifetime.

Was Rosalind, then, at least causally responsible for the DNA discovery, in the sense that it would not have happened without her? It is true that Photograph 51 helped to confirm the double-helix model. As Watson wrote in the epilogue to "The Double Helix" (added to make amends for his waspish treatment of Rosalind in the book), "The x-ray work she did at King's is increasingly regarded as superb." But she had been entrusted with the best DNA sample and the most sophisticated fine-focus cameras. There is no reason to think that Wilkins, had he been given charge of these resources, would not have obtained comparably crisp X-ray photographs—or, at least, some that were good enough to yield the few basic measurements that Watson and Crick needed.

Rosalind's later scientific career was highly successful and relatively happy. She travelled extensively in the United States, lecturing on coal to "the carbon crowd" and on the crystallography of viruses to scientific audiences. She had friendly encounters with Jim Watson (who by now had become something of a celebrity, appearing in an issue of *Vogue* opposite Richard Burton). America seemed to bring out the sunny side of this sometimes dour woman. "I have completely fallen for Southern California," she wrote in one of the many letters quoted by Maddox. (Among her Fanny Trollope-like observations was that Americans "seem to make nearly all their own furniture. It is a curious result of high standards of living—*everybody* earns a lot, so nobody can afford to pay anybody else.") While Rosalind was in California, around her thirty-sixth birthday, she became aware of persistent pains in her lower abdomen. Less than two years later, she was dead of ovarian cancer. It seems likely that her constant exposure to X rays was one of the causes.

Had Rosalind lived, would she have shared the 1962 Nobel Prize awarded for the discovery of the double helix? Maddox poses this inevitable question, only to banish it to the same idle file as "What if Kennedy had not gone to Dallas?" It's unlikely that Rosalind would have been named a co-winner along with Watson, Crick, and Wilkins, for the Nobel committee's practice—later codified as a rule—is never to divide a prize among more than three people. But Wilkins's claim to the laurel was surely weaker. His main contribution to the discovery of the double helix was not his experimental work, which was minimal after Rosalind's arrival, but his role as a go-between for the London and the Cambridge labs.

Another "what if" is worth considering. What if Linus Pauling had had access to one of Rosalind's photographs? Pauling's command of stereochemistry had already enabled him to work out the helical structure of proteins single-handedly. The information he had about DNA was meagre, though, and had been gleaned from old X-ray images that were a misleading blur of its wet and dry forms. Had Pauling come to London and had a glance at Photograph 51, he would surely have deduced the correct structure as quickly as Watson and Crick did. But Pauling was a campaigner against nuclear weapons. A witness before a committee of the House of Representatives had accused him of Communist sympathies. He was kept from seeing the King's College X-ray pictures by a State Department travel ban. As it happens, Pauling did win a Nobel Prize, his second, in 1962, the same year that Watson, Crick, and Wilkins did; but his was for peace. ♦

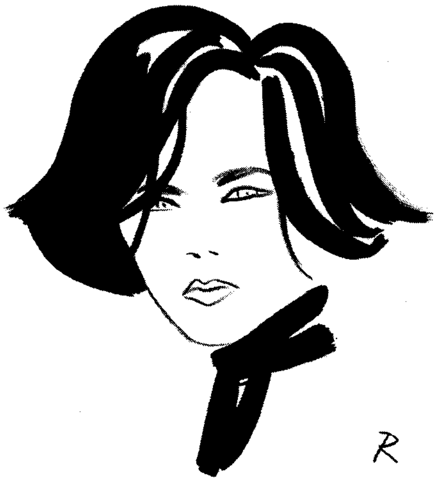
BOOKS

MURDER AND MANNERS

The quest for retribution in a small Southern town.

BY DANIEL MENDELSOHN

Donna Tartt's languidly atmospheric new novel, "The Little Friend" (Knopf; $26), looks as if it's going to be a mystery: it follows the search for the killer of nine-year-old Robin Cleve Dufresnes, who was found hanging from a tree in his back yard on Mother's Day. But if you're startled when you finally learn the secret of the title, it isn't because this information comes as a surprise but because, by the time you get to page 543, you're so engrossed in just about everything but the murder that you no longer care who dunnit. And, by that point, you suspect that Tartt doesn't care, either. Like her best-selling 1992 début, "The Secret History," this long-awaited second novel takes the shape of a murder mystery, but it's not really about a death at all. It's about a way of life.



Donna Tartt

ROBERT RISKO

Tartt, who was born in Mississippi, has set her new book in her home state, in a shabby riverside town called Alexandria. From the start, it's clear that the corruptions that interest her most are the familiar ones: ingrained, almost casual racism; hostility between the white-trash "plain people" and the "town folk" like Robin's maternal relatives, the Cleves, with their faded aristocratic pretensions; and—inevitably, in the literature of the South—the stranglehold of the past.

Twelve years after Robin's death, his murder remains unsolved, and the lack of resolution has created an emotional and moral limbo for his family. His father, Dix, has fled to Tennessee, where he lives openly with a mistress; the abandoned mother, Charlotte, floats around her disorderly house in a tranquillized fog, barely aware of her two surviving children, Allison and Harriet, who vaguely disappoint her for not being more like their brother. Allison, now sixteen, witnessed her brother's murder but can't recall what she saw, and spends most of her days sleeping. Tartt self-consciously invokes the Southern-gothic tradition to remind you that murder can make ghosts of the living as well as of the dead: Charlotte is compared to "some woman in a ghost story"; another character once discovered that her cat was being eaten alive by maggots.

Only Tartt's heroine, the ferociously independent and bookish twelve-year-old Harriet, who was too young to have known her brother, seems to resent the "forgetful doze" that has settled over her troubled house. After being told in her Baptist Sunday school that everyone ought to have a plan ("John the Baptist had a *goal*"), Harriet—the kind of girl whose idea of fun is to see how long she can subsist on eighteen peanuts a day, "the Confederate ration at the end of the war"—sets out to find her brother's killer.

The bulk of "The Little Friend," which is divided into seven long sections, is devoted to Harriet's implacable pursuit of the man she believes to be guilty, a young redneck named Danny Ratliff. A former classmate of Robin's, Danny apparently once "confessed" to the killing, in a moment of

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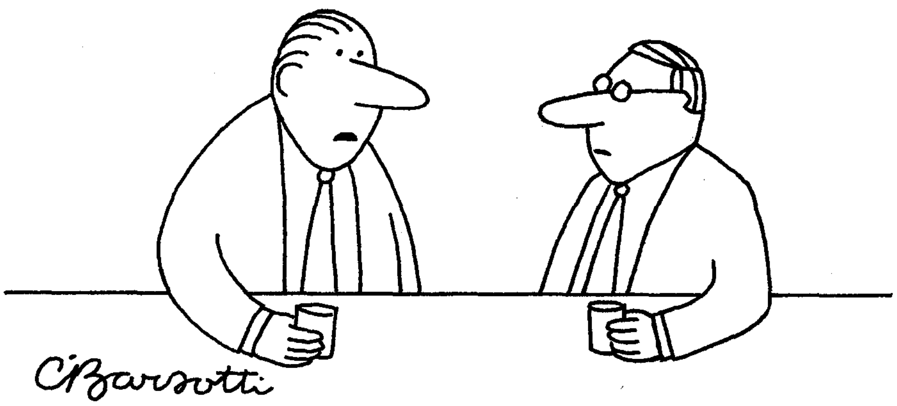


"I can't explain it—it's just a funny feeling that I'm being Googled."

confused childish braggadocio. But Harriet's quest for vengeance, in which she is loyally assisted by her best friend and frequent partner in mischief, an eleven-year-old boy named Hely, goes horribly wrong. Tartt's book is, among other things, a dark coming-of-age story: the slow workings of the plot, which interweaves the Cleves' history with that of the Ratliffs, force Harriet to recognize that nothing is what it seems, least of all herself. In her naïve prosecution of Danny, Harriet racks up a rap sheet—forgery, breaking and entering, assault, conspiracy, and attempted murder—that makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish victims from perpetrators. Indeed, Tartt has constructed her narrative so that the Ratliffs and the Cleves are mirror images of each other: the former a family of orphaned boys being reared by their backwoods grandmother, Gum; the latter a family of neglected girls being reared by their formidably crisp grandmother, Edie. Danny, finally, doesn't seem that different from Harriet.

If Harriet's plans become gratuitously elaborate—at one point she steals a deadly cobra and hurls it from an overpass into a speeding Trans Am—so do the nearly five hundred pages between her decision to find Robin's murderer and the climactic revelation at the book's end. In a mystery this dense and long, you need to feel the hand of the author moving things along to an inevitable dénouement—you need a sense that all the information you're being given is somehow vital to solving the crime. This isn't the case with "The Little Friend," which meanders through the two families' lives and their homes (the Cleves' house is stuffed with antiques salvaged from their long-gone plantation, Tribulation; the Ratliffs live in a trailer) with an attention to detail that makes it easy to forget why you're being told all this. It's as if Tartt, too, had been sucked into the languor of the Cleve milieu, lingering over the smell of Aunt Tattycorum's lavender soap or the provenance of Hely's football-helmet-shaped telephone.

The fact that "The Little Friend" turns out to be quite different from the thriller that the reader—and, I suspect, the author—may have anticipated is a serious flaw. And yet as a novel of Southern manners it succeeds remarkably well. From Hely's inchoate pre-pubescent fantasies of being with Harriet (he dreams of taking her to the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and watching the ducks parade through the lobby) to the nasal voices of hill-country snake-handling preachers and the smooth rivalries of Edie's dithery sisters, everything in "The Little Friend" convinces. In the grand Southern tradition, the writing is fluent, even lulling. It's also psychologically acute. Tartt has a nice way of shifting her diction ever so slightly in order to bring us closer to her characters: she'll have Hely yearning to "mess with" a big bug, or Aunt Tattycorum bemoaning her "cumbrous" allergies, which neatly conveys the quaintness of the old lady's pretensions. Only Harriet, the sensitive observer with that "small hard part of her which stood back, and watched," seems like an authorial convenience.

The apparently haphazard accumulation of detail about the way the Cleves and the Ratliffs live leads to the true heart of Tartt's book: the recognition, crucial to adulthood, that we are all guilty, to some extent, and that we inevitably hurt those we love. Each of the seven sections of "The Little Friend" explores a guilty act. Harriet is responsible, in a roundabout way, for the firing of the family's long-suffering housekeeper (part of a subtle but relentless leitmotiv of white housewives' casual mistreatment of their black maids). Edie is responsible, unwittingly but in a way that is deeply connected to her vanity and her impatience, for the death of her favorite sister.

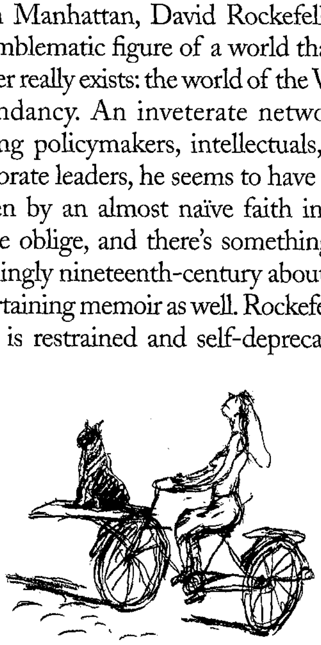
Like Harriet's preferred chess piece, the knight, Tartt's narrative moves sneakily, zigzagging to its almost casual revelation about the identity of "the little friend," so that you are forced to replay all of the author's moves up to that point. (A climactic struggle between Harriet and her adversary atop a water tower, by contrast, feels worked up, as though Tartt thought she had to deliver a crime-story finale.) However obliquely, this novel demonstrates the way in which guilt resides in the very fabric of a certain kind of small-town culture. Both the reflexive, slightly shamed noblesse oblige of people like Edie and the social structures that perpetuate ignorance and brutality among families like the Ratliffs played a part, we learn, in Danny's inane childhood confession, which, years later, destroys him.

The real identity of Danny and of the little friend, the real nature of Harriet's family and her home town—these are the mysteries that matter in Tartt's wayward but rich novel. The terrible price that Harriet and those around her pay for her self-knowledge justifies her closing insight—a tragic but also decidedly Southern one—that "victory and collapse were somehow the same thing." Tartt's heroine loves reading about Scott's Antarctic expedition, and she muses on the ironies of setting out bravely for an unknown destination, never to arrive. "The Little Friend" doesn't get where it was headed, either, but there's no question that it takes you somewhere worth going. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

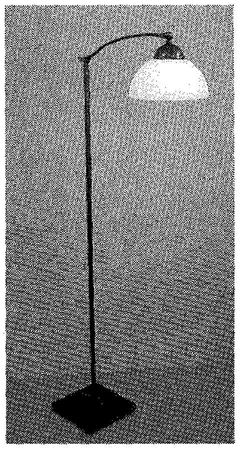
When the Emperor Was Divine, *by Julie Otsuka (Knopf; $18).* This exceptional first novel is about a Japanese family in Berkeley, California, during the Second World War. After the father is arrested for treason, the mother, daughter, and son are sent to an internment camp, where the girl tells her brother bedtime stories about the desert beyond the barbed-wire fence, and the boy whispers the forbidden name of the Japanese emperor when he thinks no one is listening. Otsuka skillfully dramatizes a world suddenly foreign, from the "No Japs Allowed" sign at the movie theatre to the horse meat served at dinner in the camp. The implicit questions about culpability resonate with particular power right now, but Otsuka's incantatory, unsentimental prose is the book's greatest strength. It turns our ideas of beauty on their head, as when the boy uneasily remembers a treasured glimpse of the horses he now eats: "They had long black tails and dark flowing manes and he had watched them galloping in the moonlight across the flat dusty plain and then for three nights in a row he had dreamed of them."

Memoirs, *by David Rockefeller (Random House; $35).* As a scion of one of America's most powerful families, a globe-trotting business "statesman," a former C.E.O. of Chase Bank, and an important player in the development of downtown Manhattan, David Rockefeller is an emblematic figure of a world that no longer really exists: the world of the Wasp ascendancy. An inveterate networker among policymakers, intellectuals, and corporate leaders, he seems to have been driven by an almost naïve faith in noblesse oblige, and there's something refreshingly nineteenth-century about this entertaining memoir as well. Rockefeller's style is restrained and self-deprecating; the account of his attempts to modernize and globalize Chase makes for excellent business history, and his sketch of his complicated relationship with his brothers is especially convincing. What may be most striking, however, is Rockefeller's resolute internationalism and his commitment to institutions like the U.N.—a healthy reminder that there was a time when the Republican Party did not see "multilateralism" as a dirty word.



Confederacy of Silence, *by Richard Rubin (Atria; $26).* At the age of twenty-one, Rubin, an Ivy League-educated New Yorker, went to work as a sportswriter in Greenwood, Mississippi. Almost in spite of himself, he came to love Greenwood, even as he remained aware of the ways in which the New South resembled the old. He also befriended a black high-school quarterback who he believed would become an N.F.L. star. Five years after Rubin left town, though, he heard that the player had been indicted for murder, and he returned to find out what had gone wrong. His investigation leads him to some dubious conclusions (particularly about college football), but his willingness to look honestly at the complexity of race in today's South is invigorating, and the book's conclusion, when Rubin realizes just how much he has not understood, is shattering.

Rock Harbor, *by Carl Phillips (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $20).* Phillips's previous volume of poetry explored the often antagonistic negotiations between the devout and the divine, the lover and the loved. "Rock Harbor" is harder and more forceful: "No" and "not" are two of the poet's favorite end words. But in these poems, which are at least as erotic as they are religious, "no" often means "yes," and the succumbing is of a bittersweet, little-death sort. In one poem, Phillips asks, "Isn't it only in / the bracing and first wake of / loss that we guess most cleanly/ the speed with which what held us / left us?" The pull that Phillips is resisting grows stronger all the time, and when it recedes it leaves a residue: the "record-of-where-a-wind-was" to be examined by "left-to-our-own-devices / acolytes."



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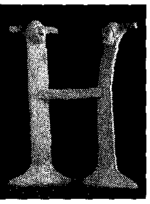

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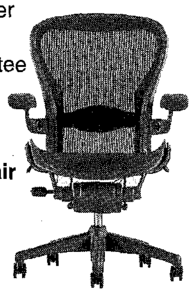

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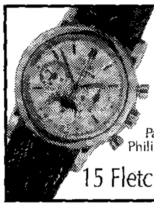

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MUSICAL EVENTS

SACRED MONSTER

San Francisco stages an operatic "St. Francis."

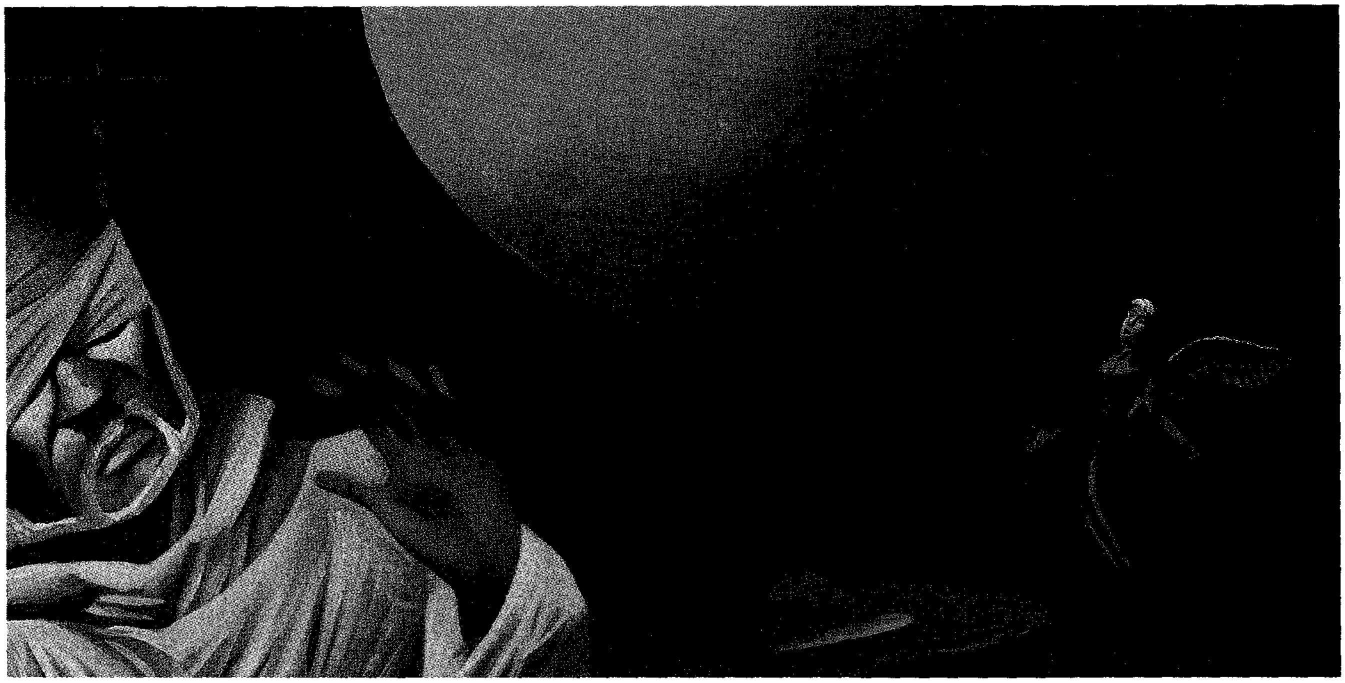
BY ALEX ROSS

The artist who strives to create a work of everlasting genius faces many obstacles these days, not least a lack of popular demand. In the end, however, nothing stands in the way of immortality but a lack of mad ambition. Olivier Messiaen's "St. Francis of Assisi," the grandest grand opera since Wagner's "Parsifal," came into being in 1983, during the first Reagan Administration, when Men at Work topped the pop charts. Somehow, it has already acquired a historical aura, as if it were an antiquity whose head and paws are only now emerging from the sand. "St. Francis" may have to wait a century or two before it finds its proper public, but a few brave opera houses are venturing to stage it, and the history books should reward them. The heroic new production at the San Francisco Opera will probably be remembered long after the entire current season at the Met is forgotten.

"St. Francis" is not easy listening. It is five hours long, devoutly Catholic in content, and by turns dissonant, jubilant, voluptuous, and austere. There are eight tableaux, each recording a stage in the life of the saint. Francis kisses a leper, speaks to the birds, receives the stigmata, dies in a state of suffering joy. The libretto, which Messiaen wrote himself, would have posed no problems for an audience of fourteenth-century Loire villagers. The music is something else again: a twentieth-century echo chamber in which prosaic turns of phrase acquire shattering overtones. The composer once remarked that he saw the Resurrection as an atomic explosion; likewise, his Francis has to undergo a death that sounds like the apocalypse. Sitting through the opera is at times a physical challenge—even Wagner knew better than to write a two-hour second act—yet the experience leaves one feeling strangely liberated. It harks back to one of those archaic Christian liturgies in which spells of boredom give way to precisely staged epiphanies—as when, in the Greek Orthodox Easter service, the church goes dark and the light of a single candle remains.

Messiaen's great epiphany occurs in the fifth tableau, in which Francis meets a Musician Angel on the road. The episode is taken from Franciscan hagiography, according to which the friar once fainted after hearing an angel play a viol. He told his brethren, "If the Angel had played one more note—if, after down-bowing, it had made an up-bow—from unbearable sweetness my soul would have left my body." In Messiaen's version, the Angel prefaces his concert with lines borrowed from St. Thomas Aquinas: "God dazzles us by an excess of truth. Music carries us to God in default of truth." The strings play a soft, unceasing C-major chord; over it, three ondes martenot—antique electronic instruments with eerie, piercing voices—unwind a thread of melody that touches on ten of the twelve chromatic notes. As you listen, your ears are teased by two textures of sound: warm strings spreading out from the center; electronic tones pinging everywhere. At the same time, you try to reconcile the stasis of the chord and the drift of the theme. These tensions are not resolved; instead, they mark out an almost visible space, in which you may well catch a glimpse of whatever it is you consider divine. The San Francisco staging heightened the moment by creating one of the most striking tableaux in recent memory: Willard White, as Francis, lying on the ground, his body racked in ecstasy; Laura Aikin, as the Angel, dancing slowly in midair; and, at the end, ciphers from a medieval parchment materializing on a scrim. "My God," someone behind me whispered.

The angel responsible for this quasi-miraculous evening is Pamela Rosenberg, the new general director of the San Francisco Opera. A veteran of the lively, sometimes demented European opera scene, Rosenberg wants to confront a much more conservative American public with something other than the usual picture-postcard Puccini. San Francisco operagoers, an enclave of old money in a city of anarchists, have never been ones to embrace experimentation; until the nineteen-nineties, the house had presented a grand total of two world premières. But at the performance I attended (the second of six) the black-tie crowd seemed game for the challenge. Whether because of the intensity of the music or the familiarity of the subject (the city's patron saint had come home), San Franciscans received the first stage of Rosenberg's revolution warmly.



Messiaen's St. Francis has a vision of the divine when he meets an angel who plays the viol with "unbearable sweetness."

MARK ULRIKSEN

Messiaen had narrow ideas about how his opera should be staged. He wanted a monastery, a forest, and an angel in the style of Fra Angelico. He was disturbed by advance descriptions of Peter Sellars's Salzburg production, which opened just after his death, in 1992, and probably would have hated the liberties taken by Nicolas Brieger, the director in San Francisco. Messiaen loved bright colors and favored loud shirts; this production went in for tony black and gray. A few of Brieger's touches did come off as willfully outré; the decision to dress the chorus in trenchcoats and fedoras, for example, lent a curious film-noir flavor to the final scene of death and resurrection. The production notes say that these costumes represent the worldliness that Francis transcends. But isn't the final chorus supposed to be throwing open the gates of Heaven? Evidently, a lot of Bogart impersonators will be standing around when the saints go marching in.

Costuming oddities aside, this "St. Francis" was done splendidly, with verve and devotion, and even a little wit. The stage was alive with meaning. Francis walked a luminous curving path, and the path often moved under his feet, rotating back and forth or rising into the air. Sudden bursts of light relieved the Germanic gloom. Willard White, a singer who is never as widely praised as he should be, presented a rock-steady, rich-voiced alternative to the famous Francis of José Van Dam—an earthier, more rugged saint. Aikin was both pure and sensuous; you couldn't take your eyes off her, especially when she was wearing blue sunglasses. Chris Merritt brought power and pathos to the role of the Leper. Donald Runnicles, the conductor, found a near-ideal balance between the score's violence and beauty.

Is Messiaen the new Mahler, the prophet for our time? In Berlin, where I am staying for the fall, he has been almost as ubiquitous as Beethoven. Simon Rattle placed the composer's "Three Small Liturgies" on one of his first Berlin Philharmonic programs; Kent Nagano, the conductor of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester, led "The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ." There was also an adventurous but notably unsuccessful production of "St. Francis" at the Deutsche Oper, directed by the architect Daniel Libeskind. The sets, an array of rotating lettered cubes, had a grim beauty, but they found no rapport with the joyous spirit of the opera. Here, too, were many men in coats, scurrying around like pigeons in Trafalgar Square. When I found myself thinking of a Monty Python skit, the spell was broken.

Far more satisfying was Nagano's performance of "Transfiguration," a work that makes gruelling demands on a vast array of musicians and singers. Like "St. Francis," it is a synthesis of all the composer's styles, from riots of birdsong to episodes of celestial jazz, from ferocious dissonance to blazing tonality. Nagano, a conductor who becomes more masterly with each year, shaped this seeming chaos into perfectly rolling Scriptural paragraphs, every climax prepared by a pregnant silence. The Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester played with astonishing virtuosity, losing little in comparison to Rattle's Philharmonic. The Rundfunk Chorus sang fiendishly complex sonorities as polished blocks. Chord by chord, the performers built another edifice of Messiaenic sound—a spectral cathedral that offered one or two glimpses of perfect joy, then melted into the night. ♦

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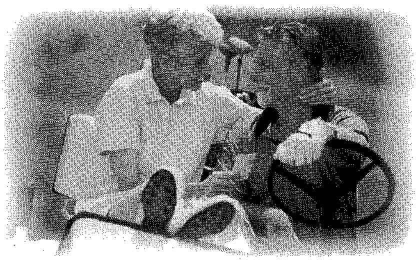

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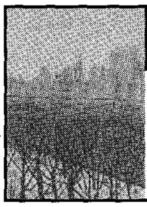

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ON TELEVISION

COMEDY CLUB

Life after "Seinfeld."

BY VIRGINIA HEFFERNAN

In 1989, Jerry Seinfeld, then a standup comedian, signed on with NBC to star in a sitcom about Jerry Seinfeld, a standup comedian, and his small group of captious fictional friends. "Seinfeld" was famously said to be about nothing, and, indeed, the characters' problems were none, or few; still, for nine seasons the friends—George, Elaine, and Kramer—kept themselves perpetually annoyed. Jerry, too, got bothered, but, as an apparently moodless man, he seemed to have a hard time staying upset, and his unsteady love life (every woman was weird) and his steady work (life is weird) put him out of pain's reach. He tempered his friends' complaints, mostly by laughing at them. And though "Seinfeld" didn't shy from unsettling themes (death, anti-Semitism), it complied with the formal requirement that no sitcom end in irresolution. Its innovation was to resolve its conflicts without sappiness. "No hugging, no learning": such was the dictate of the show's co-creator, co-executive producer, and master cynic, Larry David.

The series itself was resolved gently—there was no wasting decline, nobody stormed off the set. Seinfeld said that he wanted to leave the show at its peak (it had become, by some estimates, the most popular TV series of all time), and "Seinfeld" aired its final episode on May 14, 1998, for seventy-six million viewers. Then Jerry Seinfeld vanished from television acting and returned to standup comedy.

From 1999 to 2001, Seinfeld revisited the seedy comedy-club circuit, where he first made his name, in the seventies. For part of that time, the director Christian Charles and the producer Gary Streiner followed him through the clubs, up to hotel suites, and, ultimately, into David Letterman's green room. The result is "Comedian," a well-made, low-fi, and dim-looking eighty-minute film (it was shot on digital video) that invites viewers to contemplate the paradoxes of Seinfeld's career and the larger implications of telling jokes for money. (One can also puzzle over Seinfeld's garish new book, "Halloween," an introduction to observational humor and bravura product placement for children.)

"Comedian" is a quest romance. Seinfeld, his invincibility now a thing of the past, craves an hour-long set of simple, foolproof jokes. Why does he slum when he could retire on residuals? First off, he likes to work. (An old joke of his with fresh appeal: "People always tell me, 'You should have your money working for you.' Well, from now on, I've decided I'll do the work. I'm going to let my money relax.") Second, he's got something to prove. The follow-up efforts of the other actors on "Seinfeld"—a series each for Michael Richards, Jason Alexander, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus—came to nothing, and the show's former star now has a jinx he must shake: the "Seinfeld curse." If he can deliver a terrific, original live act, he'll show that he's an artist who can still write his own jokes, and not merely an ensemble actor who owes his stardom to television tricks or, worse, to Larry David, who wrote many of the "Seinfeld" episodes.

The documentary provides only fragments of Seinfeld's new material—perhaps so as not to preëmpt its use in future TV specials—but it easily illuminates his charisma: his assiduity, his even temper, his eagerness to please. What the movie fails to convey is his sense of humor—the one that "Seinfeld" fans used to discern in lines like "If you ruin an appetite, there's another appetite coming right behind it" or "Never be late for a plane with a girl, because a girl runs like a girl." The small samples in "Comedian"—finicky bits about overdone lip liner and answering-machine greetings—are just not funny. Seinfeld even has trouble getting a joke together offstage. Early in the film, he expresses fondness for the term "think tank," and he and Colin Quinn, the burly crank from "Saturday Night Live," gamely bat around its ironies, but noth-

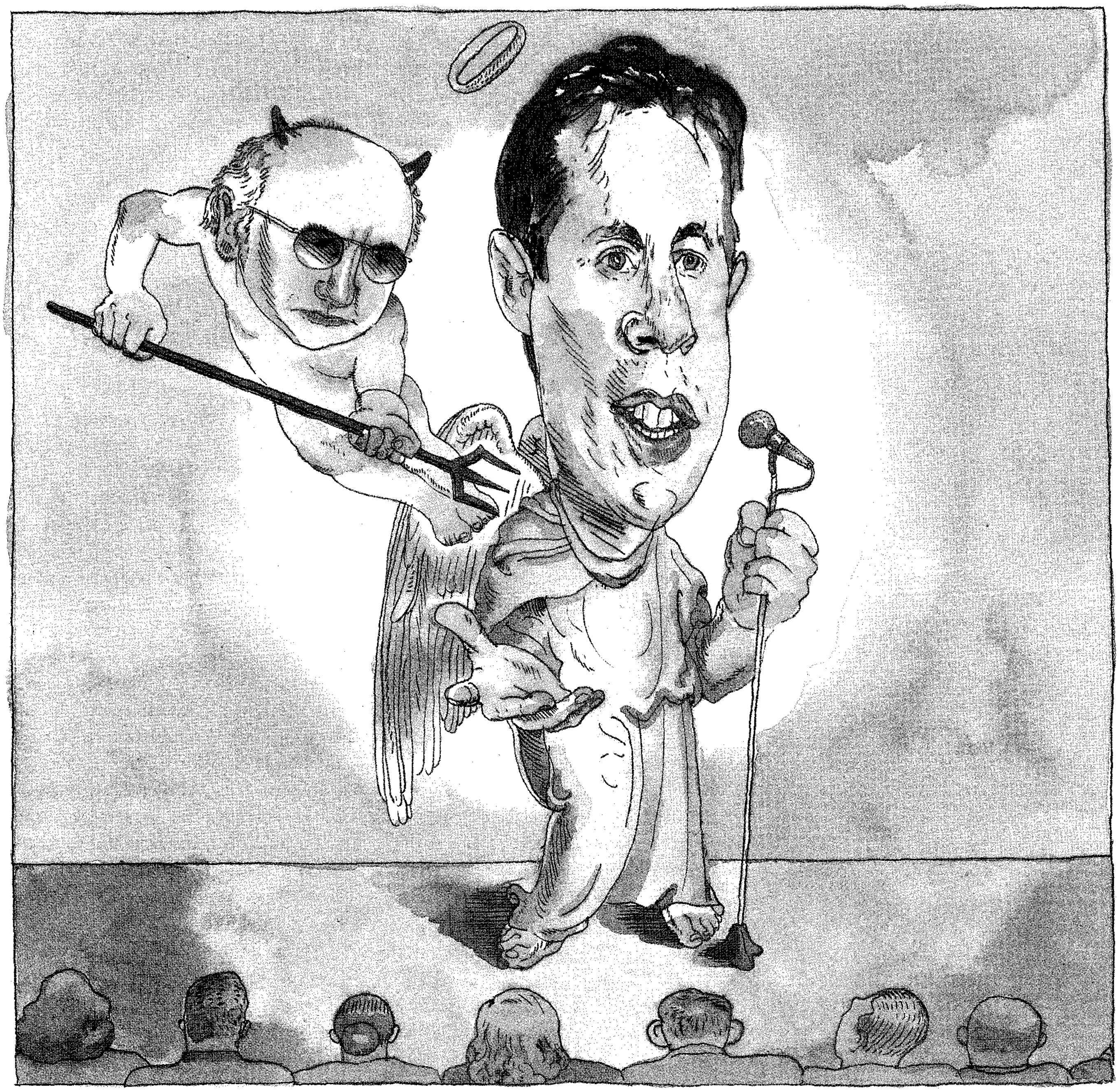
BARRY BLITT

ing takes. It's a tank. To think in. I'll just do my thinking in this tank. And so on.

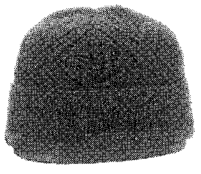
In this freewheeling frame of mind, however, Seinfeld is all charm, especially while sitting around the clubs with his comedy cronies: Jay Leno, Chris Rock, Garry Shandling, and Ray Romano. Together, the pros exhibit not repartee but rapport. At one point, Seinfeld castigates himself for having made "the rookie's mistake of starting with new material"; his pals give profound nods of sympathy. Leno compliments Seinfeld's segues and, though the rest of his praise is impeccably faint, offers him veteran's advice on how to improve his act (build a long story into it). Jokes in this setting are few. "You're out of apple pie?" Seinfeld asks a waiter at one point. "Cancel my order, then," he says, in what he admits is a practiced comeback.

Seinfeld is now frankly in awe of any comic with a great set of jokes. Chris Rock tells him that Bill Cosby has the greatest set of all: two hours and twenty-five minutes, performed without a break, sometimes twice a day. Seinfeld finds the idea flabbergasting, and, in his amazement, he reveals his talent for ingenuous, infectious admiration—the kind he used to show on "Seinfeld" for Superman or the perfect T-shirt. But when he finally brings his act to the "Late Show with David Letterman," in 2001, he opens in a different tone. "Everyone says, 'You don't do the show anymore—what do you do?' I'll tell you what I do: *nothing*." By landing so hard on that final word, Seinfeld sends a message that the new material isn't that new. The audience laughs politely—more in appreciation than in amusement. He's stuck on the "Seinfeld" punch line.

Back before "Seinfeld," when Seinfeld did standup three hundred days a year, his style was minimalist, gimmickless, and cerebral. Its critical upgrade from "comedy" to "irony" added a sheen of distinction to what could have been



Jerry Seinfeld searches for a new act. Larry David returns with a new season of "Curb Your Enthusiasm."



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standard-issue gripes about boring birthday parties and missing socks. Seinfeld spread delight along with his notes on middle-class life, each of which worked to build a contented coalition of people who, like him, sometimes had a hard time finding a parking space. He was, as *People* put it in 1988, “a tonic to audiences weary of sexual epithets and ethnic jabs.”

But it’s been fourteen years: American audiences have their stamina back. Epithets and jabs seem right on, and our thirst for tonic is—after the long spell of sentimentality from onetime sharpies like Roseanne Barr and Robin Williams—quenched. Instead, many Seinfeld fans have turned to “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” Larry David’s HBO series, now thriving in its third, and most highly rated, season. The characters are mainly middle-aged rich people in show business, the most conspicuous of whom is a former TV producer named Larry David. (Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Jason Alexander, once Elaine and George on “Seinfeld,” have appeared as Julia and Jason on “Curb Your Enthusiasm.”) The program’s title is misleading; “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” which is shot in Los Angeles, pictures upper-class life as offering nothing so luxurious as ennui. Rather, the world of David’s peers is filled with never-ending contention—day after day of quarrels with friends, enemies, and employees. As ever, David weaves ingenious plots, and the program’s semi-improvised scripts have given him the freedom to let perverse situations drive the comedy; the show brims with gags about children with big penises and the headache of having to fire black people.

Like Seinfeld, David is a Brooklyn native, and he also worked the club circuit before becoming a TV comedy writer, in the eighties. And in David there are trace elements of Seinfeld—or, in the mystery of collaboration, maybe the traces were originally David’s, and he’s only now repossessing them. Whatever the case, the perpetual smirk, the obsessiveness, the old-fashioned locutions (“Is that so?” “Holy cow!”) issued as preludes to a rebuke are now part of the two comics’ shared style. But, unlike Seinfeld, David, in persona, is bitter and volatile. He throws tantrums, tricks business partners, and seizes every opportunity to argue. And he’s not alone; in almost every episode one character says to another, “You’re such an idiot.” Later, clarity dawns, and someone else, often David himself, makes a simpler call: “Fuck you.” It’s tough to imagine Seinfeld, who was famous at the old comedy clubs for never working blue, behaving this way, even on HBO.

In the second episode of the season, Larry’s friend Richard Lewis plans to attend the Emmys with a Christian Scientist who develops hives after a peanut-laced dinner at Larry’s. Richard thinks the woman, who refuses medicine on principle, is now too ugly to be seen with, so he enlists Larry to help him force-feed her Benadryl, by baking it in brownies. In the fifth episode, Larry and his wife, Cheryl (played by Cheryl Hines), get warning of a terrorist attack on L. A. Larry hastens to tell the irrepressible secret, driving the cognoscenti out of town for the weekend and ruining an environmental benefit that Cheryl helped organize. When nothing happens, Larry apologizes (“I’m sorry there wasn’t an attack. . . . It would have been nice if there were a small explosion or something”) and makes amends to everyone but the thuggish host of the benefit, whom he openly reviles. (“Everything’s ‘freakin’ ’ with this guy. What? He can’t say the word ‘fuck’?”)

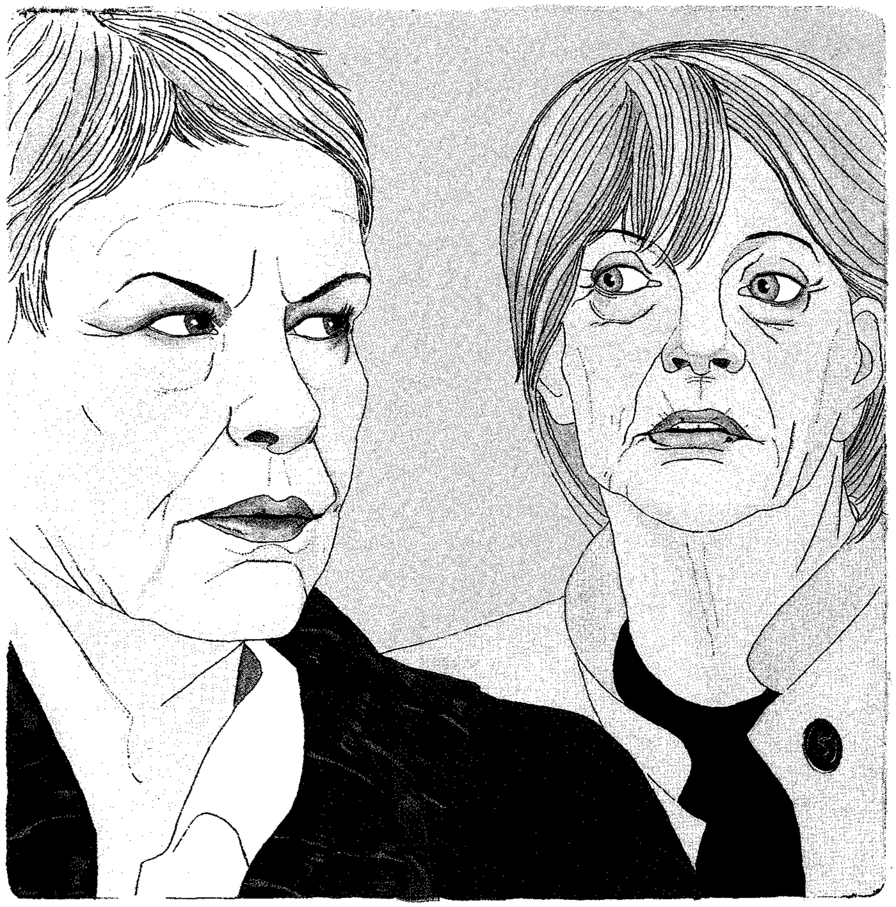
By setting the show among the cocooners of L.A., David has created an obstacle to television stagecraft; namely, that it’s harder to get the characters in one place. Some scenes are staged in cars or in pedestrian malls, but much of the show’s fun comes from David’s contrivances to bring the characters together. Often, for instance, they show up at one another’s opulent homes unannounced—a flagrant violation of L.A. realism—and, each time, there’s a fight about it. What, no call? Just a “pop-in”? David’s joke on himself is not hard to miss: Who are we, unmarried kids living on the Upper West Side? What is this show, “Seinfeld”?

It’s not “Seinfeld.” It’s angrier, grimmer, more macabre. Watch the show too often and you might note a downturn in your mood or your sense of virtue. But comedy makes no room for qualms, and “Curb Your Enthusiasm” is, with discomfiting frequency, hilarious. ♦

DAMES AT SEA

Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in David Hare's new play.

BY JOHN LAHR



Judi Dench and Maggie Smith in "The Breath of Life."

LARA TOMLIN

On London's West End this summer, David Hare reprised "Via Dolorosa," his 1998 after-dinner speech in the shape of a one-man show about the Arab-Israeli crisis; he followed it this month with another show about a stalemate, "The Breath of Life" (directed by Howard Davies, at the Theatre Royal Haymarket). But although the participants in "The Breath of Life"—which brings Dame Maggie Smith and Dame Judi Dench together onstage for the first time—lob incendiary devices from opposing entrenched positions, the play reports on an altogether different kind of war. It centers on Martin, a radical English lawyer and philanderer, who has jilted both his wife and his longtime mistress for a new Eden; he lives with a nubile young wife in the distant American Northwest—in a glass house that is transparently free of the architecture and angst of the past. The abandoned women, however, who are staunchly European in their outlook, carry the burden of history. The ex-wife, Frances (Dame Judi), a late-blooming novelist who plans to write a vindictive memoir about her feckless husband, hunts down the mistress, Madeleine (Dame Maggie), a retired curator of Islamic art, and together they stir the pot of grievance and regret.

Hare is a champion of the late John Osborne, and he has followed a similar trajectory from firebrand to boulevardier. He also shares with Osborne a talent for petulance and ridicule. As the sour Madeleine, Dame Maggie is as angular as her speech is barbed, and her nasal drawl is the perfect instrument for Hare's literate bitchiness and bile. Of her radical youth, as a civil-rights activist and self-confessed "enemy of the bourgeois," Madeleine says, "And how did that turn out? The obituary of my generation. We left no loft unconverted. The revolutionary project: to leave the world a little more chic than we found it." A lapsed idealist, Madeleine has been inoculated against life's disappointments by her own skepticism. She has called it quits with meaning; she mocks Frances's desire to write fiction. "You do it to give things significance which don't have significance," she says. Living in isolation on the Isle of Wight, Madeleine claims to use her mouth muscles only rarely, but that doesn't stop her from serving as a mouthpiece for Hare's pandering anti-Americanism:

> Even here on the island, you see them in restaurants . . . Americans. . . . "Does this chicken have skin on it?" What's all that about? . . . "No, this chicken never had a skin. This chicken shivered skinless in its coop at night, just pure flesh and feather, terrified it might one day give an American a calorie." . . . At once the most powerful people on earth and now it appears the most fearful. . . . The most risk averse. Life with all the life taken out of it.

Dame Maggie is the showier of the pair, but, with the sense of lingering moral outrage that she conveys, Dame Judi leaves the deepest impression. Dench, who is short, plump, and swift, has a very specific center of gravity. Her husky voice hits every note of brokenhearted love, from torment to resignation. When she reminisces about her arguments with Martin, she gives this sketchily drawn, ever-absent figure a momentary vividness. "Finally, one night, very late, the worst night, up till then the worst night of all, his work papers all over the bed, I threw them out of the window," she recalls. "For hours I'd said the same thing. . . . 'I want something back, I deserve something back.' Him pulling on his dressing gown. As he went out, turning. 'The world is not a court of law.' Just that."

Although these two stellar performers have a sparky chemistry, Hare's play never ignites. He drizzles glib dialogue over their encounter; like coulis on a plate, it makes the dish look more appe-

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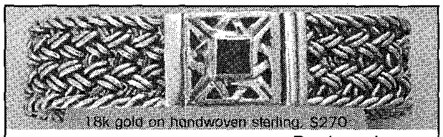

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tizing than it actually is. Beneath the well-turned and often entertaining exchanges, there is no real sense of Martin, or of his family life, or of any deeper spiritual or emotional immanence. Hare, with his suave idiom, substitutes the sound of intellectual authority for the experience of emotional inquiry. This is the trompe l'oeil of the boulevard: to make the shallows look like depths.

On the boulevard, at least, there is never any doubt about the game being played: the audience goes to be tickled, and to have its pockets picked. The problem with "A Man of No Importance" (at Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse Theatre)—a musical based on the 1994 film about an Irish bus conductor who joins an amateur dramatic society through which he successfully sublimates his homosexual confusion—is that it doesn't know whether it wants to be art or commerce. Alfie Byrne (the appealing Roger Rees) reads Oscar Wilde to his passengers by day; by night, in his fantasy life, he walks with him. But, except for his Wildean passion, there's nothing noteworthy about Alfie or his world. He is a prisoner of Catholic guilt, a shy, strangulated soul who lives with his sister. This makes him interesting as a case study but problematic as the subject of a show. Modesty in a musical is about as welcome as primness in a whore.

The makers of "A Man of No Importance"—director Joe Mantello, lyricist Lynn Ahrens, composer Stephen Flaherty, playwright Terrence McNally—are old pros, and there is laudable craft here. But the show is built around the modernist canard that psychology can be plumbed through song. "I want to sweep from the spoken word into the sung word and make it feel like it's all of a piece," Ahrens says in the *Lincoln Center Theatre Review*. But lyrics have a different valence from that of prose; though song can express emotions, it can't properly analyze them. The songs here spell out Alfie's problems without making them either dramatic or musically memorable. In "Man in the Mirror," for instance, Alfie tries to articulate the conundrum that bedevils him in life:

Man in the mirror
Staring back,
You're afraid of your own reflection.
All that you want
And dream . . . and lack
And there's no one but you to blame
Afraid of the world,
Afraid of myself
And the love that dare not speak
Its name.

Alfie's community theatre is dedicated to the premise that if a thing is worth doing it's worth doing badly. (He loses his church hall when a fellow cast member in Wilde's "Salomé" complains to the diocese about the play's indecency.) From Shakespeare to George Kelly, playwrights have had good fun spoofing the dramatic itch. "A Man of No Importance" is no different; in the song "Art," a somewhat overwritten but effective satire of the enthusiastic mediocrity of amateur theatricals, the musical achieves its happiest moments. But, in the end, its inveterate tastefulness is its undoing. "A Man of No Importance" eschews the joyful vulgarity of the show-biz musical only to embrace the aridity of avant-garde precepts; it freights itself with psychological baggage that the genre is incapable of carrying.

By contrast, "The Exonerated," well written by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen and directed by Bob Balaban (at the 45 Bleecker Theatre), is the most basic kind of theatre: no sets, no costumes, no songs, no spectacle. What it does have to offer is extraordinary news: the harrowing stories of a handful of the more than a hundred souls who have spent up to twenty-two years on death row before walking free. Put together from interviews and from the public record, the play is performed by ten actors whose lines bear witness both to the ineptness of the American judicial system and to the poetry of ordinary citizens. "It is dangerous to dwell too much on things," says the African-American Delbert, who was wrongly charged with murder by the Florida police. "To wonder who or why or when, to wonder how, is dangerous." But this is precisely what the play dares to do; its stories are stark and riveting and cunningly orchestrated. Still, arguing Off Broadway against the death penalty is like pushing at an open door. "The Exonerated" belongs in the hinterland, where its rigor could face down the forces of righteousness. ♦

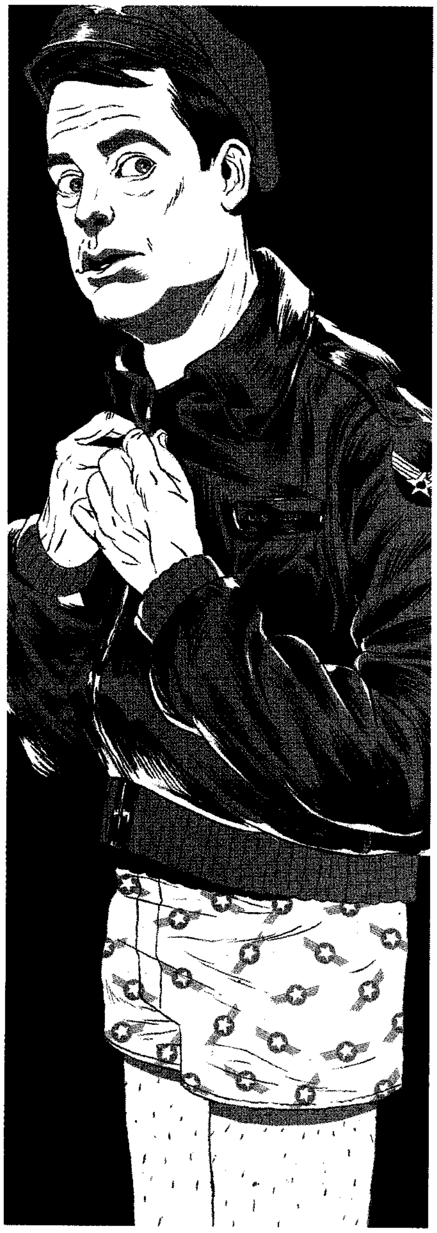
THE CURRENT CINEMA

CLOSEUPS

"Auto Focus" and "Bowling for Columbine."

BY DAVID DENBY

In Paul Schrader's "Auto Focus," a tawdry real-life story, the former radio personality Bob Crane (Greg Kinnear) first meets his nemesis, John Carpenter (Willem Dafoe), in Los Angeles, in 1965, just after Crane has begun a six-year run as the star of the TV sitcom "Hogan's Heroes." Carpenter, who works with the new videotape technology, is a would-be cool guy in the Deano-Frankie mode. He snaps his fingers in time to music, grins at everyone, and greets spangled strippers in night clubs with leering tag lines. Carpenter becomes Crane's seducer and helpmate: he understands that Crane is bored with his longtime marriage to Anne (Rita Wilson), an intelligent and well-put-together woman with a bouffant hairdo. Carpenter hails Crane as "Big Daddy" and sets up a video camera in his house, and Crane, fascinated by the voyeuristic possibilities of taping his sexual flings, takes Carpenter on as a friend without really liking him. He does need him, however—Carpenter makes him feel low-down and dirty. In effect, the two men pimp for each other: Crane, the TV star with the devilish smile, attracts the girls, some of whom sleep with Carpenter, and Carpenter's camera attracts a few girls, too. Later, Crane watches the videos alone or with Carpenter. Scoring night after night, the men engage in what you might call Old Sex—breast fixated, impersonal, brief, and, as Crane becomes a celebrity, increasingly easy to get. Despite their extraordinary intimacy, the two men address each other in a hollowly familiar way that never actually closes the distance between them.



TOMER HANUKA

Greg Kinnear plays Bob Crane.

Schrader begins with solid bright colors and insipidly colloquial dialogue in imitation of the manner of early-sixties movies—spiritually, we're in Doris Day Land, where affability and a good appearance count for almost everything. But Crane, giving himself over to sex and nothing else, falls apart, and the movie turns darker, almost expressionistic. By the time "Hogan" is cancelled, in 1971, Crane's marriage to Anne is over, and he is newly married to an actress from the show, Patti (Maria Bello), who knows about his habits but doesn't much mind as long as she gets a piece of him. Out of work, Crane hits the road and does dinner theatre, and Carpenter, carrying his video

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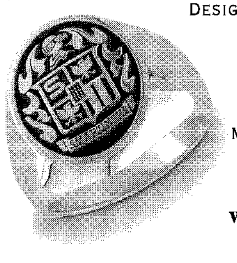

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gear and ready for action, meets him in places like Scottsdale, Arizona. "Auto Focus" certainly holds one's attention, but it's a strange and grim experience, ice-cold and borderline pointless. Paul Schrader, who wrote well about tormented men for such movies as "Taxi Driver" and "Affliction," has put his talent for inwardness in a peculiar box: he has made a film about two men incapable of an interior life. Working from a script by Michael Gerbosi, he jumps through short, vignettish scenes of mirthless fun and bland debauchery. In the end, Crane and Carpenter are astonishingly uninteresting; they want only to get laid again and again, like two guys in a *Playboy* fantasy, and perhaps that's Schrader's point—that sex addiction is an unending display of narcissism, not a drive for satisfaction. That view, however, leaves nothing at the center of the movie but a queasy semi-homoerotic bond between Crane and Carpenter. Since that bond is never completed, some of Schrader's scenes cast a gruesome pall—say, the episode of the two men masturbating side by side as they watch the tapes together. Are we meant to feel pity? To laugh? The friendship is ludicrous without being funny.

Schrader doesn't try to turn us on; this is a sex movie almost completely lacking in sensuality. I can understand that he's eager to avoid the charge of revelling in the behavior that he's deploring, but we might have enjoyed "Auto Focus" more if he had loosened his frozen objectivity and juiced up the material a little. Some of the girls are beautiful and sexy, but they pass on and off the screen very quickly. Only Maria Bello makes an impression: she looks rather like the young Tuesday Weld, and she has a similar avidity, an eagerness that wilts when Patti realizes how unreachable Crane really is. As the title tells us, the focus is on him—his smug selfishness, his shallowness, his increasing desperation. This insistently "nice" man betrays everybody and has no access to himself; he can't even undergo the release and redemption of guilt. In part, the movie is a baleful look at what men were like back then—that is, what men could get away with. In the end, Crane is battered to death in a motel room (probably by Carpenter), but it's hard to see that even a tiny spark of consciousness died with him.

Michael Moore's rounded, guzzler's belly hangs over his jeans, his shirt is untucked and probably untuckable, his baseball cap covers a mass of unhealthy hair, and his beard is neither full nor neat. The director of the documentary "Roger & Me" and the new "Bowling for Columbine" is a satirist disguised as a loser. In his movies and TV work, Moore appears as a working-class malcontent eternally in mourning for Flint, Michigan, the betrayed industrial paradise of his youth. What's up with this guy? He can't seem to understand the way capitalism works in this country, and he pads around asking questions about it. Seemingly polite, and literal-minded in a way that puzzles and irritates powerful people, Moore, in "Roger & Me," pursued Roger Smith, the chairman of General Motors, for three years in order to ask him if he would come to Flint, where GM had closed down plants and thrown thousands of people out of work. The question was calculatedly naïve. Moore refused to see GM's big picture; he was outraged by the little picture—by the ruined city, with its desolate streets and impoverished workers scrounging around to make a living.

Moore, of course, is not a loser at all but a malicious media ironist, a left-wing joker and all-around pain in the neck. He will never be much of a thinker or social analyst, and he can be stunningly unfair. He seizes on the hapless surfaces of American life—the bug-eyed nuts, the goons, the square company spokespersons—and projects his feelings of contempt onto them. But, unfair or not, Moore has successfully created himself as a public figure—a funny populist crank—and some of his jokes land on target. His ornery temperament links him not only to dyspeptic guys sitting in bars from Buffalo to Oakland but to muckraking journalists of past eras. The literal-mindedness is a kind of accusation: he thinks powerful people should take responsibility for the troubles that their decisions lead to.

The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 18 & 25, Apr. 22 & 29, June 17 & 24, Aug. 19 & 26, Oct. 14 & 21, Dec. 23 & 30) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc. (4 Times Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10036-6592), which is a subsidiary of Advance Publications, Inc. Vol. LXXVIII, No. 32, October 28, 2002. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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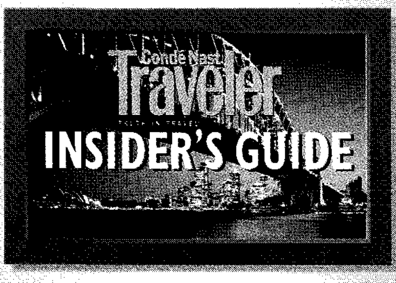

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He pursues these people—the "stupid white men," as he calls them in the title of his recent best-seller—and embarrasses them, forcing them to reveal themselves on camera as cruel or indifferent. At the end of "Bowling for Columbine," he nails Charlton Heston, the N.R.A. chief, who has twice appeared at N.R.A. rallies in towns that have just suffered the ravages of a school shooting.

"Bowling for Columbine" is Moore's sorrowful take on a familiar, humiliating question: Why does the United States have the highest murder rate of any advanced industrial nation? "Too many guns out there" would be the standard liberal answer. After all, it's hard to get a gun in London and practically impossible in Tokyo, but it's notoriously easy in Houston, St. Louis, and rural Michigan. Moore, who grew up in the gun culture of Michigan and is himself a lifetime member of the N.R.A., hauls up the usual statistics, but then he trips over Canada, a country that consumes the same violent popular culture that we do and has plenty of guns—seven million for a population of thirty-one million people—but suffers fewer than two hundred gunshot murders annually (as opposed to our ten thousand). Puzzled, Moore takes his crew across the river from Detroit to Windsor, Ontario, and noses around. The people he meets on the street and in cafés all claim that they leave their doors unlocked, and Moore, checking the claim, goes blundering into homes, apologizing to the residents for the intrusion. Slowly, through an accumulation of documentary materials—home movies, gun ads, interviews with militiamen staunchly defending the Michigan wilderness ("If you're not armed, you're not responsible," one says)—an absurdist portrait emerges of America as a paranoid nation. Moore traces our anxiety to guilt over slavery and the slaughter of Native Americans. An obsessive fear of attack causes us to stockpile arms, which have a habit of going off. As analysis, this is reductive, and Moore's satirical scattershot method offers no way of distinguishing between real and pathological terrors. But when he follows his nose—say, by tracing his own connections to Eric Harris, one of the Columbine shooters—he implicates himself in what he hates and fears, and he emerges as a wounded patriot searching for a small measure of clarity. ♦

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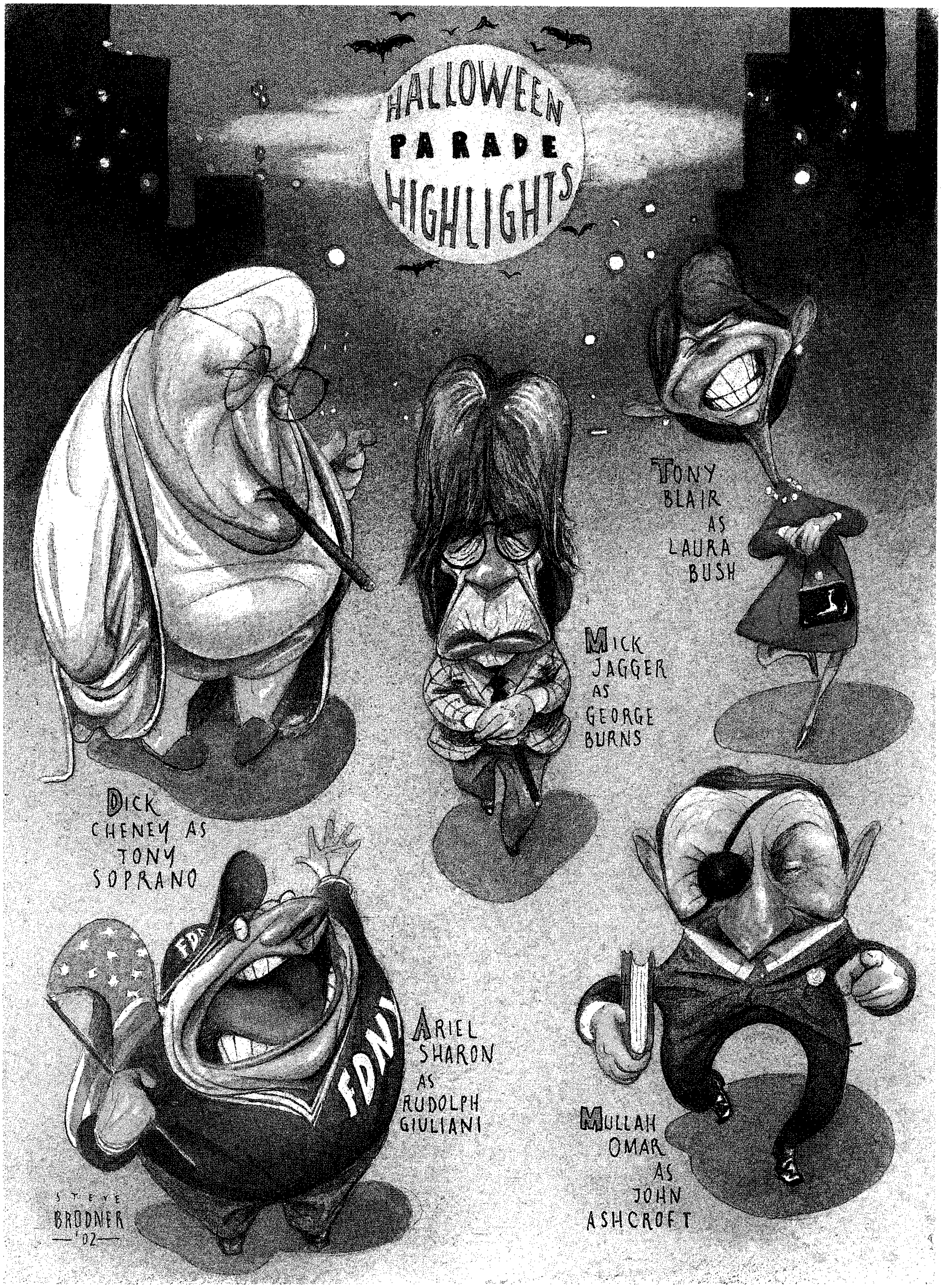
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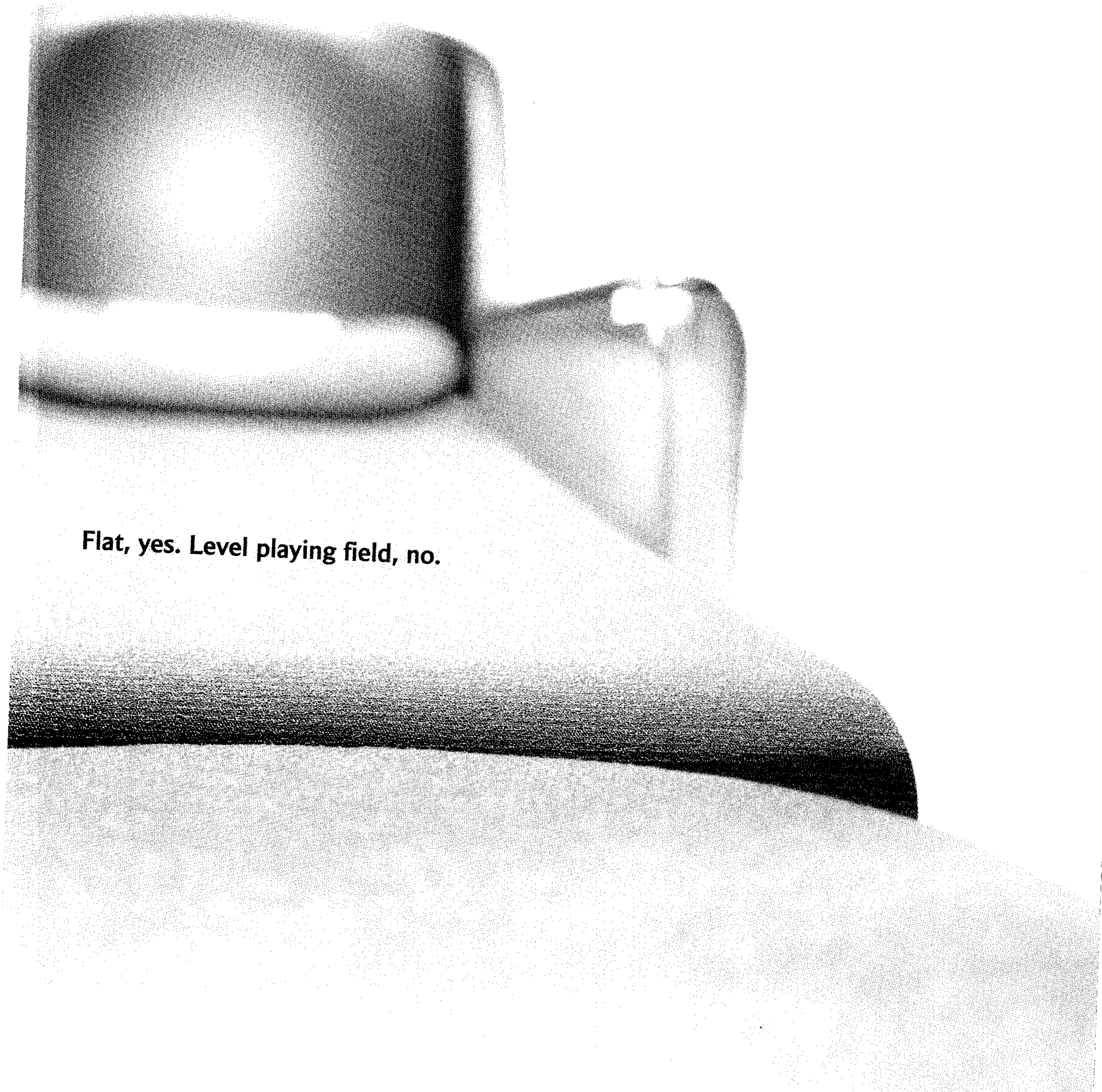

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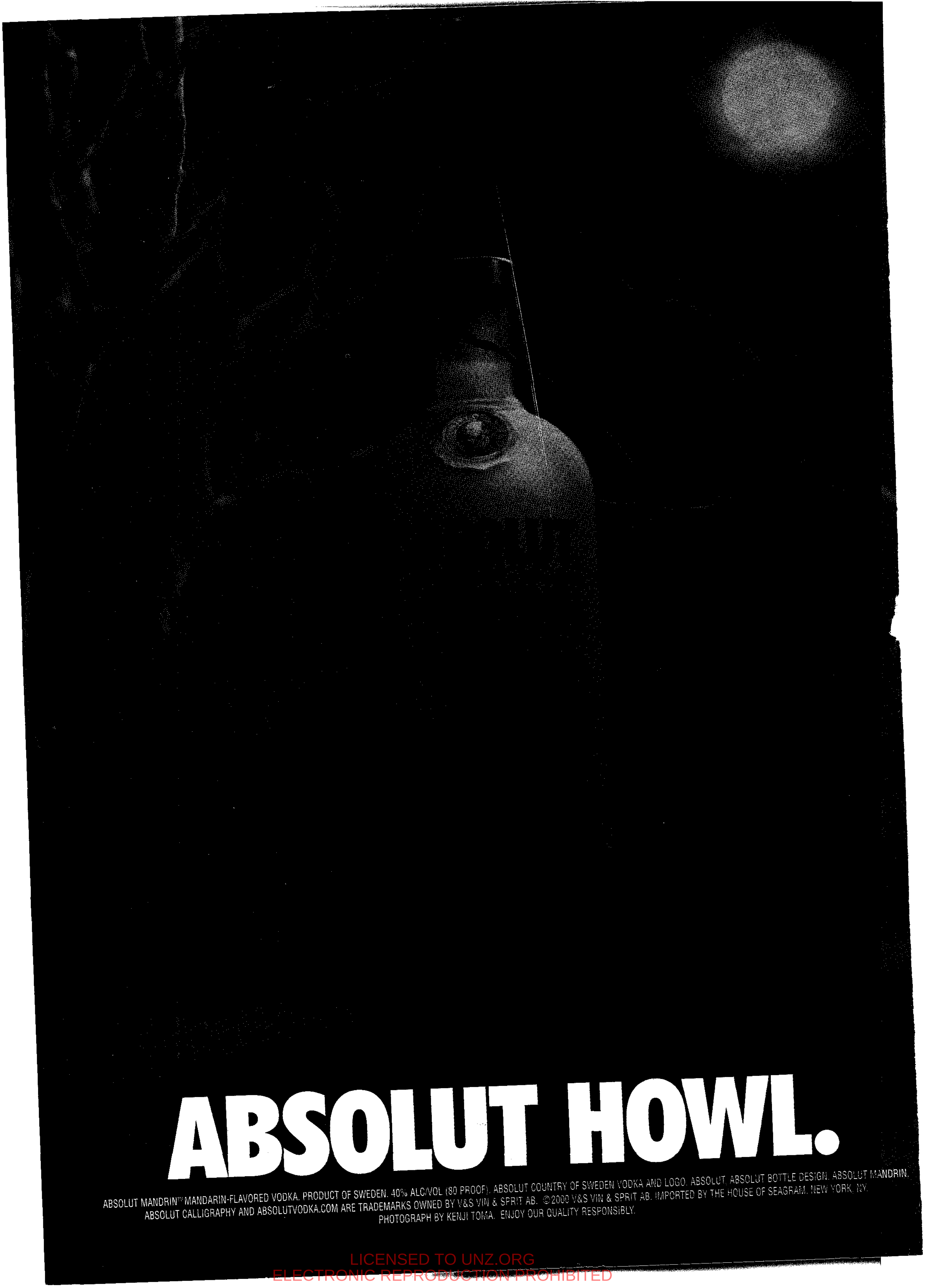

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